

# GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

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## DISCERNMENT

### Part 1

## A MISSING NECESSITY

By Rayola Kelley

If you were to ask people what they believe is missing in the church, you would probably receive various answers. The reasons could include inspirational worship, good teaching, sound doctrine, and people. We all have our ideas as to what is wrong with the church and why it seems that people are displaying less and less of a religious conscience in America, even to the point that we are losing the younger generation to the enlightened gospel of the New Age, the social gospel of socialism, the politically correct gospel of progressiveness and tribalism, the demonic, oppressive gospel of communism, and the preferred gospel of humanism.

However, it is amazing that at the center of these gospels is the awareness that mankind needs saving because it is on a collision course with a variety of forces. As a result, man is forever trying to stop this pending collision with band aids of activities and duct tape of methods as a means to try to hold the world together long enough to usher in some type of utopia for the elite. No matter what methods are used the problems in the world continue to escalate because at the core of mankind's problems is man himself.

Man is a sinner, abiding in a doomed state and standing under a death sentence. Man is his own worst enemy and is incapable of saving himself, regardless of the method or system he might devise. No matter how he looks to the world to change his plight, strives to derail his present



state of self-destruction, and change the sentence that hangs over him, man continues on a collision course with destiny, and that is with his holy Creator.

Clearly, the problem with mankind is spiritual, moral, and a total breakdown of what is sacred. Man has tried to address the spiritual aspects of his problem with religion that placates man's delusion, the moral challenges with worldly philosophies that do away with consequences, and the destructive breakdown with feel-good gospels that allow people to be happy in their doomed state. Sadly, such methods leave man in a lost state, blinded to the pending wrath of God by the false promise of some type of salvation.

Such heretical salvation always entails the deification of man. In an elevated opinion of himself, man believes he can somehow save mankind outside of God through government measures, spiritual enlightenment, good works, and social reform.

In the past I have spoken of the condition of the church in America. I have talked about how many in America are gospel hardened. I have asked where is the vision and urgency of the church in regard to lost souls and its commission to offer the only life and Savior that has been made available to mankind.

The rejection of God's salvation has created formidable problems. The problems we see today have already been prophesied in Scripture. Jesus in *Matthew 16:3b*, asked the religious leaders of His day, "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Where is the modern church as far as preparing each generation to stand in the days they are living in? Is this generation being taught to properly discern the signs of the times in order to ensure it is prepared to stand against the present darkness engulfing the world? Are they being prepared for the "Blessed hope" that

must be intertwined in the Scriptural teaching of every upcoming generation?

Sadly, we have all kinds of signs around us, warning us of the lateness of the hour. One of the signs is the type of attitude our youth are clearly adopting towards the matters of God, morality, and life. In *2 Timothy 3:1-5*, the Apostle Paul stated that in the end of the last days, perilous times would be upon us. He talked about the obvious fruits of these times—men will be lovers of selves, proud, disobedient, unthankful, unholy, void of any natural affection, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. These individuals would have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof, and as believers we are clearly instructed to turn from them. Obviously, we are seeing these attitudes being blatantly displayed in the generation referred to as "the Millennials."

Many churches I have attended seemed to have dedicated saints firmly established in their pews, but they are from a generation that is quickly passing from this world. As these saints look around to see who they can pass the torch to, there is no one coming alongside them to take it. Where are the youth of the church, the young people who are as the Apostle John stated in *1 John 2:13b*, "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one," and *1 John 2:14b*, "I have written unto you young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you and ye have overcome the wicked one."

Each generation must pass the torch on to the next generation. The older generation may have experience and wisdom, but the upcoming generation has valuable strength to continue the race and fight the battles, but such strength must be disciplined by the Word of God abiding in the young soldiers if it is going to make a lasting difference. It is from the foundations of

such disciplined strength that these young people will be able to overcome the evil one and continue to carry the torch. However, a big part of overcoming the god of this present world is something called *discernment*.

The Apostle Paul put this perspective on discernment in *1 Corinthians 2:11*, "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" In *1 Corinthians 2:14*, he concludes with this statement in regard to knowing whether a spiritual matter is true or not, "because they are spiritually discerned."

The Bible is clear; you cannot know a matter unless the Holy Spirit has first revealed it to your spirit. This is true for salvation, sin, righteousness, truth, and the matters of judgment. Jesus told Peter that the reason he knew who He was was because the Father revealed it to him. The Apostle John stated that it was the Spirit of God who convicted people of their sin, established the true standard of righteousness, and put judgment in the right perspective because it is the Spirit alone who leads us into all truth about the Truth, Jesus Christ (*Matthew 16:15-17; John 14:6; 16:7-13*).

If your understanding about spiritual matters goes back to your logic, to someone else's conclusion or to man-made doctrine, you need to know that it lacks heavenly inspiration, and it is either lifeless, limited, perverted, or heretical. And, if you are one of those who claim you know it all and there is no way you could be deceived about what you presently believe, you need to know YOU ARE ALREADY DECEIVED as to your prideful state, and are ready to fall into greater delusion if you do not repent and come back to center as to what constitutes all truth: Jesus Christ (*1 Corinthians 10:12; 12:3; Galatians 6:3*).

John tells us to test all spirits (*1 John 4:1*). Testing a spirit means discerning a spirit. Discernment is the only way to identify the spirit in operation. It is not judging a matter, but identifying what is behind a matter. Judging will always come to the conclusions a person is bent towards, but

discernment is not looking for a conclusion; rather, it is about identifying what is in order to properly respond to it.

Many in the Christian realm have been scared from developing the means to discern or to operate in the gift of discernment. Those who have discernment are often accused of being judgmental. Granted, there is a fine-line between judging and discernment, but judging is done from the point of logic and personal standards, while discernment is the ability to see into the spiritual realm and identify the spirit in operation. Judging considers a matter based on whether it makes a person judging the matter uncomfortable or it appears wrong when it comes to personal standards or ideas, while discernment relies on the Holy Spirit to push back the fog of confusion to bring clarity as to what is behind a matter.

It is hard for Christians to accept that there is a spirit behind everything. When you consider the purpose of spirit it has to do with intent and approach. It is hard to accept that, for the most part, people do not do something because it is something to do; rather, they have a reason behind what they are doing. They want to influence people a certain way as to their understanding and thinking and/or they want to affect the reality of something to ensure a certain outcome.

Consider Hollywood. You think people in Hollywood make films just to make films or do they have intent behind each film to affect people's worldview because they have an agenda they are promoting? What about liberal media? Is the media's intent to inform people or is there an agenda where their stories are intentionally being slanted and perverted to seduce the listener into coming into agreement with their agenda? How about the different political parties? Are they representing the will of the people or their own agendas?

A good example is a family friendly network that I occasionally watch for entertainment purposes. However, this family friendly network promotes the New Age by blatantly advertising the practice of yoga, as well as witchcraft by presenting it in a positive light, but all witchcraft is dark

because Satan is behind it. Keep in mind, witchcraft comes from the idea of developing a craft or art (magic) and operating in it in order to seduce and deceive people into another reality. The Apostle Paul stated in *2 Corinthians 4:2*, "But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully: but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." In *Ephesians 4:14* the apostle gave this warning, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

When it comes to prophecies concerning the end day and the influence of wrong spirits, many churches act as if they are immune from the demonic darkness now engulfing this world. They treat the Bible's warnings and instructions as being obsolete in light of so-called present day "enlightenment," or mere fables at best and a scared tactic at worse. Instead of discerning the days we are in and the spirit in operation, and going back to the simplicity of Christ by lifting up Jesus and His salvation in unadulterated spirit and truth, many churches are trying to compensate for the waning or absent numbers, especially in relationship to the youth, by resorting to worldly entertainment and methods to draw young people into the "entertainment" halls that once were sanctuaries (*2 Corinthians 11:1-4*). The truth about such attempts is that it simply wets the spiritual appetites of the youth as it enlarges the sensual appetites of their flesh to seek experiences and not the Person of Jesus Christ. James actually talked about the lusts that consume in *James 4:2-3*, "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

People may wonder why it is important to discern, because Christians must discern a matter to see whether they can come into agreement with it. The Holy Spirit's goal is to bring us into agreement with the Lord and

each other so that we can fellowship with Him, and offer the acceptable sacrifice of praise, as well as worship Him in spirit and truth, so that all service will glorify Him.

When there is an unholy agreement, one will be spiritually dulled down, which means there will be no discernment to ensure there is separation occurring between the church and the world. God calls us to holiness and holiness points to purity (*1 Peter 1:15-16*). All things must come from a source of purity or godliness. In fact, the purity of God's holiness is the consuming, purging fire upon all that is unholy.

Unholy mixtures means that purity is lacking and perversion is taking root. The more the church becomes inundated with the world, the more the church loses its ability to rightly discern and likewise teach others about separation. Instead of a black and white arena, many live in the misty flats of compromise, where everything is grey. As a result, the world is not being rooted out of the church; rather, the world is becoming rooted in the church creating an unholy mixture and agreement (*2 Corinthians 6:14-18*).

Nowadays, there is no distinction between the holy and unholy, vexing the spirits of those who are striving for such distinction in their personal lives. Without the clear distinction of the holy from the unholy, there is no separation between the profane and what is deemed scripturally as being sacred. There is no visible concern that an unholy mixture is present because purity has been sacrificed on the altars of worldliness and political correctness. It is clear that the methods adopted by many churches are to attract the world into the churches and not lost souls.

Sadly, if we are defiling the line between the holy and the unholy, we will end up with the profane. Even though there is a concept that the holy can influence the unholy in the right way, Scripture teaches to the contrary. In Haggai, the priests admitted that their holy garments could not make unholy objects holy or acceptable to God, but if an unholy object touched the holy garments of the priest, the garments became defiled (*Haggai 2:11-14*).

Scripture is clear that if you be-

long to the world, it will love you, but if you belong to Jesus, the world will hate you (*John 17:14*). No person can serve two masters at the same time, and if you love the world, you are an enemy of God and the love of God is not in you (*Matthew 6:24; James 4:4; 1 John 2-15*).

We have warning upon warning about unholy agreements in the Scriptures. These profane agreements could include the world (enemy of God), idols (demonic inspiration), heretical doctrines (wrong spirits), and false leaders (spiritual fornicators). The avenues for such agreements include fleshly lusts, superstition (ignorance), deception, and seduction. The open doors to unholy agreement can include pride, greed, pornography, and witchcraft.

It is for this reason Jesus warned that deception would run rampant in the last days and that there would be many false prophets (*Matthew 24:11, 24*). He also made this statement in *Matthew 10:16*, "*Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*"

The Apostle Paul declared that some will give way to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, the Apostle Peter warned of wells without water, religions and leaders that would be void of the right spirit and truth, and the Apostle John instructed us to test the spirits because many false prophets have gone out into the world (*Matthew 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Peter 2:17; 1 John 4:1*).

The Bible has also made mention of wrong spirits that must be discerned and guarded against by the church. Paul talked about the spirit of the world, Satan, who can come as an angel of light along with deceitful workers who transform themselves into ministers of righteousness and seducing spirits, as well as exhorting believers that they must not be ignorant about Satan's devices (*1 Corinthians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:13-15; 1 Timothy 4:1*). John talked about the anti-Christ spirit that was present in his time during his tenure as overseer at the church of Ephesus. We also know the Bible speaks of lying spirits and familiar spirits all working their particular craft to entangle us into a web of delusion.

This brings me back to the question, what does the church need the most? I would say discernment. It is clearly a missing ingredient in much of what is going on in the name of Christianity. It appears as if many do not care what spirit is behind a matter as long as it sounds good, looks right, and fits into the popular narrative of the day.

I am going to do a series on discernment to address what it is and what it is not. Meanwhile, I encourage you to consider whether you possess discernment and how it is meant to function in your life and the church today. Perhaps, you are not sure. Humble yourself and ask the Lord in sincerity and He will show you. †

## COMMENTS

"...almost all pastors step into the shepherding [cult] role with an evangelist. They won't let them into THEIR pulpit until they know exactly what they are going to say and teach. It MUST meet with the 'approval' of the pastor or they cannot get behind that pulpit. Leaves no room for the Spirit of God to move, work, redeem." - FL

"Thank you GSM for causing your readers to THINK!!!!" - WA

"Great newsletter! [May issue.] Both of you wrote about the same thing, but came at different angles. We are not here for ourselves, but our main heart should be to please Christ and to see people saved. We need to be vigilant, watchful overcomers who discern the enemy's devices, redeem the time and are faithful to carry out our commission and preach the gospel. I appreciated what Jeannette said in her article about pleasing God rather than men by being willing to confront and speak the truth in obedience to the Word. Rayola's Q&A was very informative on salvation that Godly repentance leads to salvation and is a response of faith. Salvation is a gift and a measure of faith is given by the Lord as we choose to simply believe that a matter is true in His Word. Faith allows that person to believe the good news and receives it in their heart as being so. Thanks for always challenging and feeding us every month with the Word of God." - ID

## MOVING THE STOP SIGN

By Jeannette Haley

*"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."*

— Revelation 3:20

Have you ever wished you could move a stop sign? Maybe relocate it to a more convenient spot on your normal route, or just pitch it out altogether? Perhaps you cautiously ignore certain stop signs altogether such as those that are situated in a rural setting that rarely see traffic. Maybe if no traffic police are in view, you simply do a "California stop" and roll right on through. Since we live in Idaho right across the border from Newport, WA, we drive through Newport often. At the time of this writing our usual "shortcut" is blocked off for roadwork, so we found the detour route across the railroad tracks. At that particular crossing one of the stop signs is set so far back from the railroad tracks that you can't see for any distance down the tracks in either direction.

Therefore, I stop at the stop sign, then drive a few feet forward, then stop and look again. That is one stop sign I'd like to move!



Stopping twice may be a slight irritation, but getting slammed by a train is unthinkable. Trains never lose. All of this brings to mind the many "stop signs" God has put in His Word, signs that are for our benefit and well-being, yet how many of us have figured we were an exception to the rule, ignored God's stop signs, broke His law in rebellion, and suffered the consequences? I have, and it's called reaping what you sow, which is never fun and is always the hard way to learn.

The Ten Commandments are a good example of some of the Lord's stop signs beginning with *"Thou shalt have no other gods before me"* Exodus 20:3. Most people don't give much thought to idolatry in our day and age, but it is still the number one offense against God. What people fail to stop and ask themselves is *if Jesus is not LORD of all my life, then who or what*

*is? What are my priorities, what are my goals, where do my affections lie, what am I living for, what do I think about the most, and what is of utmost importance to me?* An honest examination of oneself in light of these questions can be tough, but are necessary. Jesus *"said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me"* Luke 9:23. If we fail to deny ourselves the right to live our life on our terms, then we have made ourselves god. Therefore, if we are god, then we can call the shots and ignore God's stop signs while putting up our own stop signs in an effort to control just how far God can come into our life. Letting God in "all the way" means there are no stop signs anywhere, in any way, whatsoever. We will answer to God for throwing up our stop sign in order to maintain "our right" to our life by such things as refusing to forgive others, failing to flee youthful lusts, ignoring widows and struggling single women, the fatherless and needy children, being a stumbling block to a weaker brother, being a respecter of persons, sowing seeds of discord among the brethren, loving pleasure more than loving God, giving way to envy, strife and bitterness, being covetous, exalting ourselves, bringing a reproach on the Gospel, (just to name a few) and in general any refusal to repent of any sin of commission and omission.

Then Jesus went even further and said, *"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels"* Luke 9:24-26. Jesus put His finger right on the core of the matter, which is the fact that we fallen humans do everything in our power to "save our lives" by maintaining as much control as possible over our lifestyles. Lifestyle is directly related to whatever culture and environment we are born into. It is what we know and are familiar with for either better or for worse. Therefore, whether we set our goal to es-

cape an unpleasant lifestyle, or aim at keeping and adding to the lifestyle we prefer, the fact is, we are still trying to save ourselves, and when the LORD flashes His stop sign in front of us through our God-given conscience, or by His Word, or the admonitions, instructions, and rebukes of others, the automatic response is to ignore the warnings and either dash past the stop sign or finagle a way to relocate it.

We do this by justifying why we are right in trying to save our life but the bottom line is we don't trust God as much as we trust ourselves, which makes us our own god, and that takes us back to idolatry. This is why Jesus said if we try to save our life we will lose it. If we are busy saving our own life, living for ourselves and our own agendas and lusts, then there is no room for the Lord Jesus Christ. If we want all of God, He must have all of us. We cannot belong to the world part of the time, and Jesus some of the time. This is unhappy news for those who want Jesus for maybe an hour a week on Sunday morning, or need Him when tragedy strikes, or who hope He will show up when they take their last breath. But, if we are to believe every word from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ, then we must totally "sell out" to God. And when we do, with all our heart, then our life will be saved.

Jesus exposed the fact that those who try to save their life are, in fact, ashamed of Him, and oh! How the world is ashamed of the name of Jesus! The name of Jesus is an embarrassment to "refined" (prideful), "educated" (brainwashed), religious (deceived), and "wise" (foolish) people. His name is not to be spoken in public gatherings, the halls of Congress, at the workplace, schools or colleges, in speeches, movies (including "Christian-lite" movies), or on the news. You won't read His name in the newspaper or other general publications, or hear it spoken on television (with the exception of so-called "Christian" TV where the non-threatening, non-controversial, easy-going, wimpy, "sweet Jesus" is mentioned.) On the other hand, "God" is freely mentioned. The word "God" is liberally spoken by Muslims, Mormons, Masons, Roman Catholics,

Nazi's, occultists, Universalists and other cultic and New Age groups, historians, archeologists, etc., and when there is a major natural disaster, they call it "an act of God". While the post-modern church has been busy playing instead of praying, and becoming dulled down by motivational speakers (wolves in sheep's clothing) and other "ear ticklers" the Bible's "Stop sign" concerning the sin of twisting God's Word in order to redefine the Majesty in the Heavens, the LORD God Almighty, the Creator of the Universe, the true God of the Bible has been redefined by globalists to mean whatever "god," or "force" you want to believe in and worship.

Let's read it again, "*For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels*". Where are the men and women, and youth of today whose hearts are on fire for the living God? Where are those with a deep and burning passion for Jesus above all else? Where are the people who hunger and thirst after Christ, and who love Him and His Word more than all the silver and gold in the world? Where are the believers who long to see the lost come to Christ, to be discipled, rooted and grounded in Him, built up in their most holy faith and who go on to become torch bearers? How many "Christians" weep for the sins of this nation, the shedding of innocent blood, the resistance against all that is upright, lawful, pure, moral, and God honoring? How many pray for God's mercy upon the unrepentant, careless, self-serving Laodicean Church?

Are you ashamed of the Gospel? Paul wrote, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*" *Romans 1:6*.

A.W. Tozer wrote, "Many of us Christians have become extremely skillful in arranging our lives so as to admit the truth of Christianity without being embarrassed by its implications. We arrange things so that we can get on well enough without divine aid, while at the same time ostensibly seeking it. We boast in the Lord but watch carefully that we never get

caught depending on Him." *The Root of the Righteous, page 39*. And, horror of horrors if anybody should see us if we are suddenly touched or overcome by the Holy Spirit and find ourselves moved to tears! Quick! Throw up a stop sign against anything emotional! Keep a hard heart and a stiff upper lip even though "*Jesus wept,*" Esau wept, Jacob wept, Joseph wept, Benjamin wept, King David wept, the Children of Israel wept, King Joash wept, King Hezekiah wept, the priests and Levites wept, Ezra wept, Mordecai wept, Job's friends wept, Jeremiah wept, Peter wept, John wept and many others wept, including women, of course. Oh! But may it not be so with us! We have perfected the art of an emotionless Christianity, replete with perfected stoicism. Never mind that we are commanded to "*Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep*" *Romans 12:15*. [Emphasis mine.] Tozer said, "God desires and is pleased to communicate with us through the avenues of our minds, our wills, and our emotions. The continuous and unembarrassed interchange of love and thought between God and the souls of the redeemed men and women is the throbbing heart of the New Testament."

How can there be true revival if we insist on moving the stop signs because we are ashamed to confess the name of Jesus to others, afraid of what people think of us, resistant to His commandments, insistent of our own ways and "personal interpretations" of His Word, willfully ignorant of God and His ways, ignorant of the wiles of the devil and spiritual warfare, ignorant of Jesus' commandments, and ignorant of prophecy that was written for us? How can we please God if we move the stop sign and place it at the far end of the broad path we have chosen so we can satisfy our lusts instead of paying attention to the stop sign?

People who believe they are their own little god, having rejected love for the truth, are totally deluded about their true spiritual state; therefore, they have no problem redefining the true God of heaven to be whatever fits into their preferred concept of Him. Obviously, we are living in perilous times for many reasons, but to be

brutally honest the falling away of the Church in these last days is the greatest peril of all because multitudes of souls are perishing without Christ. Oh, they may belong to a church, they may partake of communion, sing songs, join in church activities and social events, put money in the offering, and talk the talk but they put up a stop sign when it comes to walking the walk. And by that I mean the inner "daily walk." God's Word says, "*Behold, Thou desirest truth in my inward parts; in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom*" *Psalms 51:6*.

There seems to be no end to the many stop signs that we either ignore or move out of the way altogether, but we do so at our own peril. "*And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man...*" *Genesis 6:3a*. "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*" *Hebrews 10:31*. "*For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God*" *1 Peter 4:17*? How frightening it is to see the flippancy that has crept into the house of God like a poisonous vine. The Body of Christ needs to wake up, be vigilant and sober, discern the "poisonous vines" that tend to be ignored while flippancy towards God's holiness, the Word of God, and sin becomes the norm. Christian, we need to be diligent and watchful, educating ourselves concerning doctrines of demons, false prophets, and wolves in sheep's clothing in these end days that either appear as harmless or come as an "angel of light."

We are warned in *2 Timothy 3:5*, "*Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away*". There is great deception in a "form of godliness" that "denies the power." We must recognize that the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Godhead, that He is not an "it" or a "force" but the Spirit of God. The power we need is the Person and work of the Holy Ghost in us and in our midst. "*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth*" *Acts 1:8*. We will never be able to walk in the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit if we put our stop sign up to

keep Him out. “*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*” *Ephesians 4:30*. *Acts 7:51* says, “*Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye.*” And, *1 Thessalonians 5:19*, “*Quench not the Spirit.*”

What grieves the “*holy Spirit of God*”? He is grieved whenever we willfully sin and run past God’s stop signs. He is grieved when we turn away from him and shun His Word so we can live life on our terms. He is grieved when we bring a reproach on the Gospel by our words, and deeds. He is grieved over sin, iniquity (immorality), rebellion and unrighteousness in the church. He is also grieved over the churches where He is unwelcome, shut out and given no opportunity to move on people’s hearts because of the restrictions of man’s “church as usual” timeline and programs. He is grieved when He is quenched (stifled) and His gifts are disallowed, ignored, shunned, or rejected. He is grieved when He begins to come down (manifest His presence) and move on the Body, but is interrupted or ignored because people do not discern His Holy presence. He is grieved when false prophets, heresies, and doctrines of demons go undiscerned in the Body, and grieved when the Great Commission to make disciples (followers of Christ) is not obeyed. He is grieved when He is resisted, quenched and rejected. And, He is vexed when He is present to heal, both spiritually and physically, but is disregarded by the silliness or flippancy of man. Oh, how the church needs to discern the presence of the Spirit!

Without the Holy Spirit there is no life, no conviction, no comfort, and no power. Jesus said, “*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. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you*” *John 16:13, 14*. If you are thirsty and dry, the question is have you put your stop sign up against the Holy Spirit and grieved, resisted or quenched Him? If so, humble yourself, repent and ask the Giver of gifts to fill you with His Spirit.

Running a stop sign is dangerous; it could cost you your life, or the lives of others. It doesn’t matter if your vehicle is plastered with all kinds of clever bumper stickers—what matters is if you obey the law or not. The same holds true in the spiritual realm. Ignoring God’s stop signs in His Word could cost you your soul regardless of how many years you have played church. The truth is neither your pastor, your church, your creeds, your religious platitudes, doctrines, or religious affiliations, religious works, religious titles, religious sentiments, nor anything else that you depend upon can save your soul except a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior who will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire. “*Ye must be born again.*”

Are you ready to put down your stop sign? †

## TAKING THE LOW ROAD

By Skip Moen

*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 1 Peter 5:6 NASB*

**Humble** – The road less traveled is not a highway. It is a back road, the one that wanders through no-name villages, over streams without signs, across ditches and into forests where you aren’t quite sure where you’re going. It is the road without tourists, without place names and without spectacular views. It is the *tapeinoo* road, the road of humility. When you take this road, you don’t qualify for extra miles. You don’t get a certificate at the end. You just get the experience of being unrecognized and unnoticed. It’s the same road that David wanted to travel when he cried out, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.” It’s the road of broken axles and broken hearts.

“Humble yourselves” is the Greek verb form *tapeinothete*. The root verb means to be lowly, insignificant and weak. It is the *last* thing on earth that any natural human being desires. It is precisely the opposite of fame, fortune and fitness. Everywhere we look in our culture, strength is admired, power is applauded and recognition is pursued.

According to a recent poll, the top two priorities of people between 17 and 25 are fame and money. Both are signals that personal validation is a serious deficiency in our world. But neither David nor Peter is espousing denigrating our worth. They are simply pointing out that our true worth doesn’t come from traveling the high road. Our real worth is found in humility *under the mighty hand of God*. The prepositional phrase is crucial. One can always display humility by egoless behavior, but for the men and women of Scripture, true humility is a function of the recognition of God’s sovereignty. That means the road less traveled is His pathway, not ours even if we chose the low road to accomplish our purposes.

So you’re on the low road. On this road, you don’t get to determine the twists or turns. You don’t decide when the road goes up or down. Your job is to just keep traveling, following the road wherever it takes you. And the reason you can do this is that you travel under God’s mighty hand. So no matter where He takes you on this road, you know that as long as you stay on it you will be where He wants you to be. Sometimes that will feel fabulous. Sometimes it won’t. But, as Frodo said, “The road goes ever on,” and this road is the one designed just for you.

“We cannot control the things life does to us. They are done before you know it, and once they are done, they make you do other things,” the gentleman said (from *The International* movie). But his conclusion was wrong. It is certainly true that we cannot control where the road goes, but we are responsible for *how* we travel it. We can travel with gratitude or resistance. We can travel with expectation or regret. Sovereignty is up to God. Humility is up to us. †

## THE UGLY WORD

(From Vance Havner)

“Confrontation is an ugly word in religious circles today. We are developing diplomats, not prophets. We are on Carmel and there can be no summit conference with the priests of Baal. It is Baal or Jehovah, and in the showdown, the God that answereth by fire, let Him be God.”

## WHY I CAN NO LONGER DEFEND THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

By Dr. Stephen R. Holmes

I have defended the ministry of women in the church in public for a while now, including on my blog. I don't think I can do it any longer. Not because of any lack of calling or gifting in their ministry, but because of a lack in mine.

Take Phoebe Palmer. She began to be involved in leading a Bible study in New York around 1830. She soon received invitations to preach across the USA and in the UK. Something like 25,000 people were converted by her ministry. 25,000 people. Converted. Does that need defense? Really?

She visited prisons regularly, ran a society helping poor people in need of medical attention, and was involved in an ambitious project to challenge the new problem of urban poverty through the provision of low-cost housing, free schooling, and employment. She had a particular concern for orphans throughout her life. Challenging injustice on a grand scale. Do you want me to defend that?

In *The Promise of the Father*, and 20-odd other books, she stressed the idea that God could and would give the blessing of holiness in an instant to a believer, and taught that holiness would be gained by faith. This teaching gave rise to the Holiness Movement, which by 1900 had changed the beliefs and practices of almost every evangelical church in America and Britain. Her ideas shaped the early Pentecostal movement, and the modern charismatic movement.

She formed the spirituality that formed me. She changed the world. Who am I to even think of defending her? By any standards, she was one of the most powerful preachers, and most influential leaders, of nineteenth-century American evangelicalism. For me to try to defend her ministry would be as ridiculous as a worm trying to defend a lion.

She did not often encounter criticism for presuming to preach as a woman, but eventually she wrote a defense of the ministry of women,

*The Promise of the Father* (1859). She argued that it was a clear mark that the gift of the Holy Spirit had come that women as well as men could "prophesy," which to her meant preach powerfully and evangelistically to spread the gospel.

In the face of so evident a work of the Spirit as was seen in her life, who am I to even consider the question of whether God had called her to preach? It would be offensive, presumptuous—approaching blasphemous—to even accept that the question can be asked.

And then there's Catherine Booth. And Mary Dyer, [and others] and Rose Clapham, all-but forgotten, whose first sermon, preached when she was 18, saw 700 miners converted to Christ. Defend that? Why?

There's a thousand stories like it that I know. Ten thousand times ten thousand that have gone untold, no doubt.

And I think of women who I have the privilege to know, who I sit in awe of, some of whom graciously allow me to call them friends. If I could preach one tenth as powerfully or effectively as [certain women] or if I had a tiny portion of the vision and capacity to inspire change or if I had some little echo of the pastoral wisdom and visible holiness of [certain women] or if I could even once in my life make something happen the way [women] do every day—then I might think the question of whether these women are permitted by God to lead and preach was worth thinking about.

As it is, no. I can't defend their ministries. I am not worthy to.

I will continue to fight sexism and bad teaching wherever I see it. I will continue to explain, as well as I can, the truth of Scripture, that it is a crucial mark of the Kingdom that God calls women and men indifferently to every ministry. I want to give more time in coming months and years to tracing the real harm that bad theologies of gender do.

But I'm not going to try to illuminate the sun. And I'm not going to try to dampen the sea. And I'm not, any longer, going to try to defend the ministry of women in the church.

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## PEOPLE SPEAKING OUT

"If I could only make Christians understand that the word HEAD in this Scripture [*Ephesians 5:23*] translates back to Hebrew as ROSH - i.e., Rosh HaShana! The true meaning of it is "beginning of; out from." Meaning woman came OUT FROM MAN (the rib from Adam), NOT that he has some sort of headship over her. I get tired of explaining this to those who are stiff-necked and self-righteous in their understanding." - FL

"The swamp is really mucky and sticky and will need a full sweep. I do not trust any greedy politician that wants to pad their own pockets by taking from ours. For President Trump to do what he wants will be costly, many people will actually have to get a job. The pyramid churches have to change also, all of the pew sitters supporting the higher ups so they can travel the world and send their kids to the best colleges so they can look down on the ordinary people. We certainly need revival, that is for the church not the world. Well that's my take!! Give Trump a chance and keep insisting on that wall! - WA

"It is tragic to see the depths this country has sunk to. Enoch Powell was so very right when he prophesied the streets of this county will run with blood. He was against immigration on the scale it is now, we simply do not have the room for them. All our green land is being taken up by houses, but we would not need them if we did not have so many invading this country. Our hospital system was first class at one time, now you cannot even get to see a doctor for two or three weeks, and hospital emergency departments are packed with foreigners wanting free treatment. So elderly people here who have paid into the system the whole of their lives are being ignored or excluded. Oh come Lord Jesus, come quickly." - UK

"For more than 15 years I've researched chemtrails, by every source available. This is not a conspiracy theory—it's a FACT. And, I still maintain that these chemtrails are the specific reason we are seeing such explosive numbers of people contracting cancer, along with breathing problems!!! - FL

## RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

**Q:** *Are we in the time of the great falling away?*

**A:** As many Bible Scholars today consider the events in the world and the condition of the church, they would concur that we are in the time of the falling away. The Apostle Paul made reference to this in *2 Thessalonians 2:3*. He stated that before the unveiling of the man of perdition (the anti-Christ) there would be a falling away from the truth. He goes on to say that the only remedy against falling away in such times is to love the truth. The truth is Jesus Christ and His Word (John 14:6; 17:17).

If you follow the Apostle Paul's reasoning and warning in light of Jesus' coming, he warns that believers must not be shaken in their minds as to what has been established as truth and troubled by what they hear in regard to the approaching of the day when Christ comes. Paul's first exhortation in *2 Thessalonians 2:3* was, "Let no man deceive you by any means." He goes on to say certain things must happen before all of these events will come to fruition.

Jesus warned that many would be deceived by false prophets before His second coming and the Apostle John in his first letter stated that many false prophets have already gone out into the world (*Matthew 24:11, 24; 1 John 4:1*). There have always been false prophets, but there is a warning that there will be an influx of them in the last of the end days, trying to lead many away from the true Jesus. I have to admit I have seen many false prophets stand behind pulpits warning people to beware of false prophets as they set up their web of seduction, propaganda, indoctrination, and delusion to take people captive.

It is important to understand what falling away means. The idea of falling away is the same as going apostate from the truth established in God's Word. An apostate, as far as Christianity is concerned, is a deflector from the truth established in God's Word. *Hebrews 6:5-6* makes this statement about becoming apostate, "And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing

*they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."* I did not quote this Scripture to get in a big debate about eternal security, but what I want to show is that there is a grave seriousness in falling away from the truth. It is clear that those who do, do not love the truth as established by God in His Word. After all, it is clear that the Word of God will abide forever, while all other beliefs, philosophies and doctrines will be shaken by judgment and brought down into a pile of nothingness (*Psalms 119:89; Hebrews 12:26-27; 1 Peter 1:23-25*). Man should shake before God's Word, soberly handle it, and urgently obey it, but instead he is busy debating it while putting it into theological boxes and doctrines in order to lay some claim as to having a corner on some truth and revelation that has eluded the rest of the fundamental church for over 2,000 years. People who do not love the truth will adjust it to their take on God, religion, and pet doctrines to fit it into their preferred reality. Those who do this mishandle the truth and the wrath of God abides on them (*Romans 1:18*).

However, there has never been a time in history where man has not been falling away from God and the truth of His Word. There has never been a time in history where God's Word has not been under some type of attack somewhere in the world. It is man's natural bent to adjust everything about God and religion to his particular preference that serves his preferred reality, while trying to undermine the unadulterated truth in other people's lives. Sadly, at such times it is never about truth, but about someone justifying his or her own ideas by convincing some uninformed person that he or she is right.

I must admit that much of the fundamental beliefs I was taught are still part of my foundation, but my understanding of God is not limited to such beliefs. God and His ways and works will never fit into theological boxes, pet doctrines, and the cemented theology of men. God is living, eternal, and is not a one-dimensional idea; therefore, He will never work within man's concept of Him.

God is the center of all truth,

Jesus is the living essence of all truth, God's Word the written record of all truth, and His Spirit the One who reveals and confirms all truth. If a person moves away from any aspect of the heavenly truth, he or she will begin to fall away from it, and if he or she does not repent and come back to center out of love and faith, then that person can eventually become an apostate of the truth. ✠

## CHALLENGING QUOTES

"Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak; not to act is to act." - Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor, author, and theologian who opposed Hitler and the majority of German churches that, by their guilty silence were endorsing the leadership of the Fuhrer.

"Preparing for reality, and for what the Word reveals, is wise. Heeding God's boundaries is training for God's realities." - Larry Spargimino

"There is something different between saying you have faith and then being pressed into a tight corner and proving that you have faith." - Smith Wigglesworth

"One wonders which displeases God more, *idol* worship in heathen lands or *idle* worship in fashionable sanctuaries. Certainly Isaiah and Amos tell us of divine disgust at form without force and ritual without reality, and our Lord was nauseated at Laodicean lukewarmness." - Vance Havner

"If we do not have the Spirit of God, it were better to shut our churches, to nail up the doors, to put a black cross on them, and say: 'God have mercy on us!' If you ministers have not the Spirit of God, you had better not preach, and you people had better stay at home. I think I speak not too strongly when I say that a church in the land without the Spirit of God is rather a curse than a blessing." - Spurgeon

"A considered reflection upon church history leads me to conclude that the most disastrous and outrageous tragedy since the Garden of Eden was the divorce of the church from her Head, when she lost her direct connection with Jesus and permitted other authorities to take His place."

— Kenneth D. Butcher