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Discernment 4 TESTING THE SPIRIT

By Rayola Kelley

I have been dealing with the issue of discernment. If there is any confusion between prideful, personal judgment and true spiritual discernment, I do hope these articles will clear it up. Jesus talked about righteous judgment in *John 7:24*, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." You cannot rightly judge unless you know how to rightly discern. Simply put, if you are not properly discerning, you will be void of the means to make a righteous judgment about a matter. All matters of God must first be discerned before they can be correctly understood (*1 Corinthians 2:14*).

Clearly, wrong judgment is based on appearances and appearance usually stirs up prejudices and biases. Prejudice is often based on presumptions and bias either has affections or some type of bribery attached to it where judgment will be adjusted to fit the narrative while overlooking what is true and real. We know that King Saul was the people's preference because he looked the part of a king, while David was God's choice because of his heart. We are told that God had to give Saul a new heart because he really did not have the heart to be king (*1 Samuel 9:2; 10:1-9; 13:14*).



The prophet Samuel even fell into the trap of outward appearance. When he considered Jesse's sons, he felt that the oldest son fit the description of a king, but the Lord instructed him in *1 Samuel 16:7*, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

I have read this Scripture many times and I know through the years preachers have made reference to it, but how many of us still look on the outside of a person and judge him or her based on personal opinions and feelings? How many of us see color, race, physical challenges, and etc. upfront and immediately draw a conclusion instead of properly discerning a matter as a means to come to righteous judgment?

Our prejudices highlight what we take offense against, while our biases overlook the offense of those we prefer or protect. We can see the sliver in everyone else's eye but we are blinded by our own board of judgment in our eye that perverts what we do see. This board taints everything including our attitudes, while justifying wicked actions and evil fruit. This not only affects how we see a matter but how we hear something. Jesus made reference to this very fact in *Luke 8:18*, "Take heed therefore how ye hear; for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."

It is clear that we must learn to discern the unseen elements. Some question the importance of discerning, especially since we are educated, possess religious degrees, and have our doctrines down pat, but man's intelligence is incapable of discerning the unseen realm. Man's logic deals with the physical material world, while showing skepticism towards the unseen realm (*1 Corinthians 1:20-25*). In fact, matters concerning the unseen realm are often mocked by these people and totally ignored altogether.

As stated before, we can only properly discern the unseen spiritual world by the Holy Spirit (*1 Corinthians 2:10-14*). It is for this reason that *1 John 4:1* instructs us to try the spirits. The word "try" has to do with testing (challenging) the spirit or examining it with the intent of either approving of it or disproving of it. It is important to

point out the need to test all spirits behind all matters.

The question is why do we need to test the spirit behind a matter? Testing the spirit is necessary to determine if we can come into agreement with someone, a teaching, or a movement. Agreement has to do with what we expose ourselves to when it comes to what we are going to allow to influence our thinking. The Apostle Paul put it this way in *2 Corinthians 6:15-16*, "And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." If a person exposes him or herself to a wrong spirit, the person will lose his or her spiritual edge to discern what is really going on.

We knew a minister's wife who had tremendous discernment. However, she exposed herself to the doctrine of a famous movement and the last time we saw her she had lost much of her discerning edge. It is vital that even though we as believers may know that someone seems scripturally on, we still must try the spirit behind the person to see if we can expose ourselves spiritually in each matter. You need to keep in mind that the underlying goal of preaching, teaching, music, radio, TV, and the movie industry is to try to influence each of us in our attitude and way of thinking when it comes to the matters of the world. The more we as Christians expose ourselves to the wicked agenda of the world, the more we will be dulled down and rendered ineffective in our Christian walk by the spirit of the world.

For example, consider the emphasis of most of Hollywood and the media which is political correctness and promoting the agenda of the LGBT community. Whether it is subtle or blatant, most of the media is trying to influence society by conditioning it

to embrace what was once considered morally wrong. All you have to do is closely listen to various people on both sides of the aisle (Liberal and Conservative) to see how successful this conditioning has been in influencing people's worldview. The liberals have become "progressive," communistic in their thinking, while the moderates have become liberal and the conservatives are now moderates, and those who maintain real conservative views are becoming the enemy.

Let me ask you a question, how much has your attitude changed about certain conduct over the last 10 to 20 years? When I was a new Christian, an unmarried couple living together was wrong, but now it is acceptable and those who are living in such a manner (including people in churches) do so without their consciences being pricked even in the slightest way; but, has God changed His mind about such matters? In *Malachi 3:6*, we read this statement, "For I am the LORD, I change not." In *Deuteronomy 27:11-28:58* the Lord was clear that those who live morally contrary to His Law will bring themselves under a curse and eventually judgment.

The moral climate of the day is not new, and all you have to do is study history to know the consequences for societies and nations who give way to such immoral practices. Should we also be surprised that it is happening today because the Apostle Paul made this statement in *1 Timothy 4:1-2*, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron." Society is calling good evil and evil good. That, my friend, should be a frightening reality to each of us because *Isaiah 5:20* clearly states, "Woe" to such individuals!

Consider homosexuality. A couple of decades ago it was a disgrace and was rejected by a general consensus. When Ellen DeGeneres came out of the closet on her sitcom TV show to reveal her preference, her show was cancelled, but now look at her popular talk show. Thanks to sit-

coms like Will and Grace, and other media promotion, this subject has taken center stage and is being pushed down our throats as being normal and acceptable. What once was considered normal and acceptable such as marriage between one man and woman is often treated as being obsolete, and those who actually have the audacity to believe that it is the only acceptable union in the eyes of God when it comes to the sacred institution He ordained, are considered to be abnormal, unloving, or homophobic and treated as the enemy that must be subdued or done away with altogether.

But, there is even a greater tragedy, and that has to do with some of the visible church accepting homosexuality as being normal. Bibles are being adjusted to condone this abomination, preachers are embracing it in the name of love, certain church denominations are opening their pulpits up to those who are practicing this lifestyle, and some well-known Christians are jumping ship to pursue this lustful preference.

I hope you are getting my point. The church Jesus died for should be setting the *moral* trend as the light in any nation; instead, the world has come into the church and is now setting an *amoral* trend as the church loses its light to stand distinct and its salt of truth to make a distinction (*Matthew 5:13-16*). And, it all comes down to how much Christians have exposed themselves to the spirit of the world. If you expose yourself enough to something, then you will take on the understanding and the attitude of what you are allowing to influence your thinking.

It amazes me that many Christians think they can expose themselves to wrong spirits and not be affected or influenced in some way. Yet, the Lord tells us if we recognize there is a wrong spirit, we should not be casual and tell ourselves, "It can't hurt me, I can handle it;" rather, we need to separate ourselves from it for there can be no real agreement. *Amos 3:3* simply states, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

As believers we must not assume that if the person's doctrine is right that the individual is always operating in a right spirit, or because you agree

with the person for the most part about spiritual truths and practices, it does not mean you put down your guard and simply go along with everything that person is saying and promoting. As believers, we have a responsibility to try the spirit behind any and all matters to see if there is genuine agreement in Spirit and truth present. If not, we should not toy or play around with thinking "it's no big deal;" rather, we must separate ourselves from it to protect the true integrity of our Christian testimony and walk.

This brings us down to what constitutes spirit. The Bible is clear that deep calls to deep (*Psalms 42:7*). This concept means we have a natural tendency to come into agreement with people with like spirit in their belief, thinking, and agendas. We either sink to greater lows with those we agree with or we strive to greater heights with those who are truly honorable. People who cannot find common ground will never be able to have agreement. Jesus put this matter into simple terms in *Matthew 12:25-31*, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." If you follow Jesus' teaching it was in relationship to a wrong spirit. He was being accused of having the spirit of the devil and not the Spirit of God.

It's clear that the visible church has been in the simmering water of compromise for some time, but now it clearly sits in the boiling water of complacency without any real concern for its indifferent state and the inability of its members to discern and separate that which is unacceptable to God. This indifference displayed by the visible church towards the distinct aspects of God's character such as holiness that demands excellence from believers, creates an unholy mixture that not only robs people of their ability to discern, but has allowed the life to be sucked out of the environment, killed many testimonies, and destroyed any real authority and power.

The Apostle Paul refers to three major spirits in *1 Corinthians 2:11-14*: the Holy Spirit, the natural spirit of man, and the spirit of the world, Satan. The question is how do we discern these three spirits? After all, the religious leaders of Jesus' day accused

Him of having a demon and not the Holy Spirit. We are warned that Satan can come as an angel of light, deceitful workers can come across as apostles, and wrong spirits can present themselves as ministers of righteousness (*Matthew 12:25-31; 2 Corinthians 11:10-14*).

To properly discern a spirit, we must understand the one true Spirit that all wrong spirits counterfeit in some way. I learned a long time ago that bank tellers learn how to discern counterfeit money, not by studying the counterfeits but by familiarizing themselves with real money. There is a certain color and feel to real money, and even though the counterfeit is very close to the real thing, its color is a bit off and the texture is not correct.

To properly discern wrong spirits we must understand the Person and work of the only right spirit: the Holy Spirit. Sadly, many in the religious realm have no clue about the Spirit of God. Granted, they have their pet doctrines about Him, but the reality is they have no ability to really discern Him. When it comes to the visible church's presentation of the Holy Spirit, extremes reign through ignorance and superstition. Either everything supernatural is accredited to the Holy Spirit or the Holy Spirit is some vague doctrine that does not really have a major role in the church. Some reject His presence, while a few become silly when they encounter Him because they don't know what to do with Him, and others justify absolute insanity and chaos in His name. In many cases, His work has been replaced with worldly methods, fleshly worship, and religious programs.

To put it bluntly, without the Spirit present, a church might as well close its doors. There will be no real anointing in teaching to challenge souls in the transforming ways of righteousness, no power on the preaching to wake up souls with conviction of sin, no authority in ministering to struggling souls, and no salvation of lost souls. The life changing work that needs to be done in churches is done by the Holy Spirit. He is the promise and gift to the Church as well as its seal until the day of redemption, and for leaders or denominations to act as if there is no need for the presence or work of the Spirit in the Body of Christ

is not just ignorant and misleading, but heretical and could be operating close to disdain or blasphemy because His work is either being shut down or it is being accredited to Satan (*Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8; 2:38; Ephesians 1:11-14*).

Jesus was quite clear that He needed to leave so the Holy Spirit could be sent as our true Comforter (*John 16:7*). The Spirit would do greater work than Jesus did (*John 14:12*). Christ was one man, but the Body of Jesus would be made up of many members; and through the members, the work of the Holy Spirit would be multiplied many times over. Keep in mind, believers would do the same work as Jesus. After all, a person is born again with the Spirit of God, prepared, empowered, and sanctified by the Spirit.

Next month I will discuss the character and work of the Holy Spirit. Meanwhile consider what your understanding about the Holy Spirit is, and the attitude you have developed towards Him. If you do not regard Him, know you will be void of discernment and power to live the Christian life. †

THE GIFT OF DISCERNMENT

(Excerpts from *ZION'S FIRE*
by Marvin J. Rosenthal)

In all the discussions these days concerning spiritual gifts, almost nothing is being said concerning the gift of discernment. This gift, however, is desperately needed today in the midst of an overwhelming array of contradictory religious claims and "fake drummers" asking Christians to march in their cadence. The gift of discernment will be even more crucial as the end of the age approaches and the number and power of false religious teachers increase.

In an age being increasingly driven by "experiential" theology, believers need, more than ever, to be grounded in sound "biblical" doctrine. The "God told me" syndrome never had divine sanction, and it surely won't work as the age moves toward its close.

"Too often we are Christians by assumption, manipulation or instruction, rather than Christians by regeneration." - "There is no place to hide except in the blood of the Lamb."
— A.W. Tozer

EDIFYING WORDS

By Herbert Lockyer

The miracle of Pentecost was the placing of the church in the world. The masterpiece of Satan is placing of the world in the church, which results in spiritual barrenness. The church's Pentecostal power has been lost through its conformity to the world. Spurgeon said: "Do you want to attain the 'full assurance of faith' (Heb. 10:22)? You cannot attain it while you commune with sinners. Do you want to flame with fervent love for God? Your love will be dampened by the drenching of godless society. You may be a babe in grace, but you cannot become a great Christian, you cannot be a 'perfect man' (Eph. 4:13) in Christ Jesus, while you yield to the principles and business practices of worldly people. It is harmful for an heir of heaven to be a great friend of the heirs of hell.

Evidently, Paul had reached the contented state, but when he used the word *content*, he did not mean what has been described as the torpor of a foul tranquility. What he implied was the acceptance of inevitable conditions as the sphere in which we are to do the will of God. "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound." (Philippians 4:12), he reminded the Philippians. By divine grace, Paul could handle both poverty and prosperity as they alternated in his experience, because at all times, he sought the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Only as we seek the will of God in all circumstances can we possess an inward peace that enables us to find the most profitable way of dealing with every kind of situation. Discontentment is written large over present-day society and causes so much of our industrial strife. Not content with such things as they have, people want more and still more. Solomon could write of one who would not "rest content, though thou givest many gifts" (Proverbs 6:35). Our Lord told the soldiers of his day, "Be content with your wages" (Luke 3:14). Today the word is *contest*, not *content*. But, *godliness with contentment* is ever great gain, no matter what our material position may be. (See 2 Tim. 6:6.)

NOBODY

By Jeannette Haley

"For many are called, but few are chosen." – Matthew 22:14

"He must increase, but I must decrease." – John 3:30

Perhaps you have already heard the humorous little story of Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. It goes like this: There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

That is fun and clever, but the truth is God is looking for Nobody to serve Him, because it's the "nobody's," not the "somebody's" that generally get things done. It's the nobody's with a servant's heart who are content to remain and work for the Lord in the background so that when the Spirit of God comes down in power and might to save, heal, and deliver nobody gets all the glory but God who alone is worthy. The nobody's believe *Romans 12:3*, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think: but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" and the nobody's practice *Romans 12:10*, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." The nobody's live according to *Philippians 2:3, 4*, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

The principle of the "nobody's" is throughout the Bible, and clearly explained in *1 Corinthians 1:24-31* where we read the admonition of the Apostle Paul concerning the call of God to the church at Corinth. He wrote, "But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the fool-

ishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

In our fallen human condition we begin early on in our earthly life trying to get everybody to adore us and make us the center of attention. We throw fits, temper tantrums, pity parties and play games to bend people to our will and way of looking at things. Adults who have never really grown up and who want to be somebody have simply fine-tuned their game playing. It never occurs to them that everybody wants to somehow be somebody as well. We don't want to think of ourselves as going through life as just another nameless, faceless anybody who ends up being a nobody; thus, when the competition to be somebody begins, you see *James 3:16* in action, "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." This evil should never be allowed to take root in our hearts, or ever be manifested in the Body of Christ, any more than any other sin mentioned in the Word of God.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthian church about their calling, it's clear that he was exposing their pride and lack of humility, which is a product of integrity and good character. One thing you will learn about character and humility is that the moment you take any credit for it, or pride in it, you have just shot the horse you were riding out from underneath you. At this point it does no good to grab a big stick so you can beat that dead horse. No! You must face your own deceitful heart and bring your soiled "righteous" rags to the foot of the cross and cry out to Jesus to forgive you, and His blood to cleanse you for

your pride in trying to be somebody. If it's any consolation, everybody is in this same, fallen condition. The difference, however, lies in the innermost decisions we make as individuals as to whether we will truly humble ourselves and line up with God and His Word, or whether we will allow the seeds of corruption and rebellion to remain hidden in the dark places of our unrelenting, unregenerate hearts.

The first people Paul mentions of those that God does not call are the "wise men after the flesh." This refers to those described in verse 18 of *1 Corinthians 1*, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness: but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." How much of the world today, including those who are Christian in name only, consider themselves to be wise and the preaching of the cross to be foolishness? "But unto us which are saved it is the power of God." God's Word stands true, "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world" *1 Corinthians 1:19, 20*?

The wisdom of the world is after the wisdom of Satan who tempted Eve with the lie, "Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" *Genesis 3:3b-5*. Those who are wise in their own eyes operate in the spirit of the world, or Satan. *Isaiah 5:21* says, "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" *Proverbs 3:7* says, "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil". But, for the true Christian their wisdom is from above. *James 3:17* says, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." This is the wisdom of the "nobody's," the people who have become like little children with pure hearts.

When it comes to the "somebody's" who see themselves

as wise, it is the foolish things of the world, such as the "nobody's," that God uses to confound them. Concerning those things which are mighty God uses the weak of the world, such as children, the poor, the helpless, the infirm, and often women, to confound them. God chooses the base, the despised and the things which are not, to bring to naught the things that are so that no flesh should glory in his presence. There are many examples throughout the Bible of how God has used weak "nobody's" to confound the wise. Consider the disciples for example. If He had been a man of the world, Jesus would have chosen the elite of His day to accomplish His mission; however, He used simple fishermen. These men were considered uneducated, lacking "social status," skills, wealth or worldly distinction of any kind, yet the Lord chose these "simple" men to build the Kingdom of God.

When the Children of Israel were slaves in Egypt, God chose a man who had spent forty years on the backside of the desert caring for sheep, who, when called by God to go set His people free suddenly felt his own weakness and said, "*Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt*" Exodus 3:11? Consider the shepherd boy, David, the youngest in his father's house, and surely the weakest by the world's standards, but God told Samuel to anoint him as king over Israel. Remember Rahab the Gentile harlot who was no doubt considered to be base, and was despised by many, but who saved the spies and became part of Jesus' lineage along with Ruth, the Moabitess. Think of Mary, a young virgin with no impressive titles, position, power or great wealth, who said, "*My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed*" Luke 1:46-48.

Consider the two men who went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee was a man of religious status, the publican a despised "nobody" in the Jewish minds of that day. And so "*The Pharisee stood and*

prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." Then Jesus shocked his listener's "I'm-a-somebody" sensibilities when He said, "*I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*" (See Luke 18:10-14.)

In spite of their lower social status, the disciples had a hard time learning how to be humble nobody's and true servants. Surely they had to know from the reading of the Torah that God told the prophet Jeremiah, "*And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest*" Jeremiah 45:5. Nevertheless, we read in Luke 9:46-48, "*Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him. And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.*" Jesus spent a great deal of time teaching His disciples that the way to virtue and godly character is the way of self-denial, sacrifice, and humility. In Luke 14:11, after telling them the parable of the great supper, Jesus said "*For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*"

Who do we think we are to not be willing to humble ourselves before the Lord God Almighty? Who do we think we are to refuse to submit to His Lordship, His Word, His commandments, His example, and His will for our lives? Jesus is our supreme example and even He prayed, in His most desperate hour, "*Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done*" Luke 22:42. When He taught the disciples how to pray, He first taught them humble reverence, "*Our Father, which*

art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven." If Jesus thus prayed who are we to defy His holy order by insisting that our will be done rather than His? Our Lord taught self-abasement, not self-love and self-exaltation. He said in Luke 22:27, "*But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.*" 1 Peter 5:5, 6, "*Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.*" Think of Mary who humbly submitted to God's authority and said, "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.*" King David, a man after God's own heart, declared "*For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness* Psalm 84:10." A good study is Micah 6:8 which tells us what kind of a person God will look to, "*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*" Consider Queen Esther's humility and submission when she said, "*Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish*" Esther 4:16.

The cry of the Apostle Paul's heart to Christians throughout the ages still rings strong and true today in his letter to the Romans, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to*

think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" Romans 12:1-3. Paul had no hidden personal causes or agendas to be a "somebody", and said "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" Acts 20:24. The truth is the Christian life is not for the purpose of making mankind the center of the universe. That means if you wonder "what's in it for you" and continually insist on being a "somebody" who is not willing to be a behind-the-scenes "nobody," then you lack godly character, are treacherous, lack a servant's heart, and cannot be trusted to truly minister to God's sheep for their sake and God's glory alone.

"The Ministry" is all too often used as a platform for aspiring somebody's to be seen of men, applauded by others, exalted into positions of power and authority, and to serve as a means of implementing unbiblical, self-serving agendas and causes. We are warned in God's Word to beware of wolves in sheep's clothing, false prophets, workers of darkness, heresies, Satan's wiles and his "ministers of light," as well as those who preach "another Jesus, another gospel, and who have another spirit." How very desperately the Church that Jesus died for, the Church that He is building, and the Church He is returning for needs spiritual discernment!

As implied in this article, the key to being a "nobody" whom God can use for His glory is true humility. Everybody and anybody, along with somebody and even the "nobodies" have to deal with pride. Andrew Murray hit the nail squarely on the head when he said, "Pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you." He also said "Humility is the displacement of self by the enthronement of God." We cannot have it both ways, we cannot serve two masters! The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." (1 Corinthians 15:31). In James 4:6 we are told, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but

giveth grace unto the humble."

Rayola said in one of her Bible studies "You cannot properly submit unless you come from a position of humility. The mind of Christ in you is humility—an attitude of humility." She also reminded me of the different impressions of pseudo humility people can operate in such as the following: 1. Fake Nobility – Gives the impression of humility but lacks integrity. 2. Self-Pity – Lacks true brokenness that leads to repentance. 3. Victim – "This is my lot in life – God is unfair." 4. Outward Piousness – Gives the appearance of humility but lacks the spirit of humility. She states, "Humility is a state that is prepared and willing to be humbled by the truth, revelation, and Word of God. Without humility a person is not in the right state to receive instruction from God by faith."

What are you? Are you a humble "nobody" in your own eyes, or do you see yourself as a "somebody" who deserves to be "in the ministry" as a notable individual? If you consider yourself to be a "nobody" in the kingdom of God, but nevertheless the fire of God's Word burns in your soul, your spirit longs for all that God has for you, and your heart's desire is to be a servant of the Most High, then consider who the Lord is searching for to serve Him in 2 Chronicles 16:9a. "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him and in this gripping Scripture in Ezekiel 22:30 "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none." Isaiah 66:2b says "but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. Jesus said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him John 4:23."

Final questions to consider: Is God calling your name? Are you willing to humble yourself as a little child, to become an unknown "nobody" for the cause of Christ, one who is willing to become broken bread and poured out wine in identification with the Lord Jesus Christ, and join the nameless,

faceless martyred "others" according to Hebrews 11:36-38a, "Of whom the world was not worthy"? †

WHO IS THE MOST IMPORTANT?



"At the same time came the disciples came unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

— Matthew 18:1-4

Jim Elliot is supposed to have said about missionaries, "They're just a bunch of nobodies trying to exalt Somebody." Are you such a nobody?

ANDREW MURRAY QUOTES

"Humility is nothing but the disappearance of self in the vision that God is all."

"Here is the path to the higher life: down, lower down! Just as water always seeks and fills the lowest place, so the moment God finds men abased and empty, His glory and power flow in to exalt and to bless."

"Pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you."

"As natural and easy as it has been to be proud, it must become natural for us to be humble."

HOW TO KEEP THE SABBATH

By [Chip Brogden](#) | [Blog](#), [Ekklesia](#),
[Fellowship & Church](#)

"The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day" (Mt. 12:8).

The Sabbath (and every other thing in the Old Covenant) points to a spiritual fulfillment in Christ. Jesus is not bound by any rule, or regulation, or tradition, that says thou shalt, or thou shalt not. He is Lord over the Sabbath; the Sabbath is not lord over Him. We who are in Christ do keep the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for us is not a day of the week. It is certainly not a day for attending religious services. It has nothing to do with the calendar. If we want to keep the Sabbath we need only abide, continue, and dwell in Christ, as the branch abides, continues, and dwells in the Vine. For the branch is resting in the Vine. The branch does not struggle or worry or force itself through sheer effort to produce fruit. Instead, it simply lives in union with the Vine, and in that sense, it rests. It trusts in the Life of the Vine to produce the fruit. And this is the principle of the Sabbath rest.

Now we see this rest in Christ. You would suppose that, as the Son of God, He had the liberty and freedom to say and do whatever He pleased. But He frankly stated, "I do nothing of Myself. It is the Father that dwells in Me, and He does the works." This, my friend, is rest. He is the Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus mastered the art of observing the Sabbath day. What does it mean? It means I do nothing of Myself. My teaching is not My own, but it belongs to the One Who sent Me. And I do nothing except what I see my Father do, and I speak nothing except what I hear my Father speak. That is extraordinary. But that is what it means to rest in the Lord.

Now our relationship to Christ is to be exactly the same as Christ's relationship to the Father. I do nothing apart from Christ. I speak nothing apart from Christ. And I do nothing and speak nothing in my own strength, but I trust in the life of the Lord Jesus to do in me and through me what I cannot do. Or, if you like, it is the place Paul describes in Galatians 2:20: "It is no longer I who lives,

but Christ who lives in me." Not I, but Christ. This is the secret to the Christian life. And may I say that this: "not I, but Christ" is the normal Christian life. It is the way it is supposed to be, from the very beginning.

Remember that Adam's first day of life, after he was created, was a day of rest. Now the Christian life begins the same way. If any one is in Christ, the Bible says that he or she is a new creation. You are born-again; you are born from above. And the first lesson you learn in this spiritual life in Christ is not doing, but being; it is not working, but resting.

How disappointing that the harlot church – the religious system – does not teach you how to enter into rest. It wants to immediately put you to work. And so you wear yourself out, trying to be holy, trying to be more like Christ, trying to please people – the pastor, the elders, your fellow church members. And you sometimes feel as if you can never do enough. You can never give enough, you can never volunteer enough, you can never attend enough. And my, the guilt you feel whenever you say no, or whenever you feel as if you aren't doing enough!

Your first day in Christ is a day of rest. Now let's not get tied down to a calendar. That first "day" in Christ may take weeks or years. We are after the spiritual principle of the Sabbath day, and we are not talking about a twenty-four hour period. This is something you learn and you walk in the rest of your life. How unfortunate that people do not begin with resting in Christ. They get saved, and they go to work for religion, and they are like a slave living in Egypt instead of a Hebrew living in the land of milk and honey. Then after so many years of slavery they become institutionalized, and think this is the way the Christian life is supposed to be.

Well, it is that way for many people, but it does not have to be that way. Your first day in Christ is a day of rest. Works will come. But your first day as a new creature in Christ is a day of rest. It will be a day of rest until you learn what it means to abide in Christ, to dwell in Him, to rest in His finished work. That is the basis of everything else. If the word "season" helps you to understand this better

than a "day" then think of it as a Sabbath season. But the first lesson is how to rest. That is the principle of the Sabbath.

I hope you are beginning to see how far and beyond this goes. From this perspective you see how silly it is to get all worked up into a lather over Sunday or Saturday, Sabbath day or Lord's day, what you can do and what you can't do. Those are arguments for little children. Let us go on to maturity. Let us put away childish things and become men and women of spiritual wisdom and discernment. God is after a spiritual condition, a spiritual result, and to get it He goes to work deep within your heart. That is the basis of the New Covenant. †

THE THINGS DESPISED

By Oswald Chambers

"After the flood the human race was split up into nations, and God called off one stream of the human race in Abraham, and created a nation out of that one man. **The Old Testament is not a history of the nations of the world, but the history of that one nation.**

"In secular history Israel is disregarded as being merely a miserable horde of slaves, and justly so from the standpoint of the historian. The nations to which the Bible pays little attention are much finer to read about, but they have no importance in **the redemptive purpose of God**. His purpose was the creation of a nation to be His bondsman, that through that nation all the other nations should come to know Him.

"The idea that Israel was a magnificently developed type of nation is a mistaken one. Israel was a despised, and a despicable nation, continually turning away from God into idolatry but nothing ever altered the purpose of God for the nation.

"The despised element is always a noticeable element in the purpose of God. When the Savior of the world came, He came of that despised nation; He Himself was "despised and rejected by men," and in all Christian enterprise there is this same despised element, **"things which are despised God has chosen."** *The Oswald Chambers Daily Devotional Bible, Pg. 675*

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

Q: *Why did Jesus say, "Let the dead bury the dead?"*

A: The Law requires a person to honor their parents, and to some Jesus' statement would be contrary to the Law that He gave on Mount Sinai. As a result, there are different interpretations as to what this might mean. One is that the man was waiting around for his father to die. The thinking is that perhaps his father was elderly and that the man should not wait around for his death, but he should follow Jesus until it actually occurred.

The other interpretation is that it had spiritual applications. Burying the dead is a worldly exercise that involves various rituals. Since his father was physically dead, then it would make sense to let those who are spiritually dead carry out the rituals, while he followed Jesus.

However, there is a third interpretation that is probably correct because it involves the Jewish culture in relationship to burying the dead. According to *Archeology and Biblical Research*, at death, the body would be placed in the family burial cave. Scripturally we know this because Jesus' body was placed in a newly hewn out tomb. However, the procedure does not stop with the tomb. After about a year, the body would have decomposed and there would be a final act of mourning before taking the bones and placing them in a chest in what was called the secondary burial. This is a historical fact because we have seen these stone chests that contained the bones of a person. In fact they thought a few years back that they had discovered the chest that would have contained James' bones because his name was on the chest.

This ritual of putting the bones in the chest had a spiritual significance to it. According to the rabbis, this procedure would mark the person's final atonement for sin; therefore, the bones could finally be laid to rest. However, by Jesus telling the man to ignore this final procedure He was implying that it was not necessary or that it was wrong. After all, atonement required some type of sacrifice, and Jesus knew He would become the

ultimate sacrifice that would not only atone (cover) for sin, but He would take it away and bring lasting reconciliation between God and man. †

THE UNIVERSAL[ISM] DRIFT By T.A. McMahon

(Executive Director *The Berean Call*)

I've been involved in observing trends and doctrinal influences among evangelical Christians for nearly four decades, and there have been only a few unbiblical developments that have surprised me. I've been grieved by them, but not shocked (mostly because I'm well versed in what the Scriptures say will take place as we draw near to the return of Jesus Christ). . . . Critically related to salvation is the increasing belief of professing Christians that one can earn his or her way to heaven. This false doctrine has joined universalism (which claims that everyone ends up in heaven) as one that more and more evangelicals are embracing.

A major reason for this drifting-on-a-landslide into unbiblical beliefs is that fewer and fewer Christians are reading God's Word and are therefore not alerted to the warning given in Hebrews 2:1: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." The church for the most part is not only slipping biblically—it isn't even *thinking*. The huge popularity of the universalism-endorsing book and recent movie *The Shack* is evidence that millions within Christendom have become enamored with that philosophy. As enlightened as they may see themselves, they appear to be oblivious to the fact that if everyone gets saved, there is no point to the gospel.

MARTYRED JANUARY 8, 1956

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." ~ James Elliot

"And people who do not know the Lord ask why in the world we waste our lives as missionaries. They forget that they too are expending their lives... and when the bubble has burst they will have nothing of eternal significance to show for the years they have wasted." ~ Nate Saint

THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST By Kenneth Butcher

It [marriage] is no different in the relationship of the church with Christ. For the church to be in right relationship with Jesus she must put aside her busy agendas, lay down her self-seeking, relinquish all denominational pride, give up her sectarianism, dismantle her false structures, turn from following imposing personalities and reject all religious idols. She needs to unreservedly give herself to Him who "*gave Himself for her*": yielding herself wholly to His will. To know how to please Him, she must enquire, listen, seek His presence, keep company with Him, commune with Him and bond with Him. Then she will enjoy Him, draw strength and character from Him, know His mind and be able to truly love and serve Him. Then, and only then, is she fully free. Then, and only then, will the fullness of His blessing flow to and through His submitted body.

Headship means that in practice we do what He desires which raises the question, how do we know what He wants? He has told us what pleases Him in His Word and doing those things which are clearly enunciated there should be our starting point. As we obey the obvious He may give us further revelation from His Word by His Spirit and guide us in a variety of applications that conform to that.

Practicing Christ's headship will mean 'calling upon the Lord' as a corporate way of life. It will mean respect for God's order in the church and it will mean listening for Him and listening to each other and exercising corporate conscience. It necessitates keeping connection with the Head and abiding in His love. On the way to the cross Jesus told His disciples to "*abide in My love*" and He told them how to do that, it was by keeping His commandments: "*If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.*" The Apostle John, perhaps above others, demonstrated the joy of an intimate loving relationship with Jesus. "*We love Him because He first loved us*" and; "*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren*". (1 Jn. 4:19; 3:14) †