

# GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

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## Discernment 5 EXAMINING THE SPIRIT By Rayola Kelley

One of the hardest challenges is to discern the spirit in which we are operating. The Apostle Paul explains it best in *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." In arrogance, we can become quickly deceived about ourselves.

The Apostle Paul also gave this warning, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (*1 Corinthians 10:12*). In *Galatians 6:3* he states, "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." The truth is there is a great level of seduction that operates within the fallen nature of man, as well as in the realm of Satan, who is the father of lies (*John 8:44*). In fact, wherever sin operates unchecked, unchallenged, and not properly repented of, there is a deceivableness that operates with it (*Hebrews 3:13*).

The earthy man clearly thinks on a fleshly level. *Romans 8:5-8* plainly describes the carnal mind of such a man, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh...For to be carnally minded is death...Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." The intelligence of man can only improperly judge the matters of God and not properly discern them. He will deem such spiritual issues as being foolish (*1 Corinthians 1:23*). In fact, to the unregenerate man God's wisdom is sometimes too simple, obsolete, and obnoxious to contend with; therefore, *Romans 12:2* tells us that the mind must be transformed. *Philippians 2:5* tells us how such a

feat will be accomplished. We must let the mind of Christ be in us, and *2 Corinthians 10:3-5* talks about vain, idolatrous imaginations of man while it goes on to exhort us to bring all thoughts into captivity to Christ.

This brings us down to what constitutes spirit. I have taught on this many times, but it is vital that believers are reminded of how the spirit behind them is established by their motivation, intention, and goals. *Proverbs 16:2* tells us that all the ways of man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weighs the spirits behind a matter. In the NIV the word "spirits" has been replaced with the word "motives." Motives of the carnal man are selfish, prideful, and treacherous. The fact that God is weighing the purpose and reasoning behind our emphasis and pursuits reveals that if our motives are not pure towards Him that all actions attached to them will be considered unacceptable and perverted. Such actions will also reveal that we are missing the mark of what can be counted as righteous.



The next question is how can we discern our real motives since we can easily be deceived about them? It comes down to our emphasis and pursuits. What we emphasize points to our **agendas** and will reveal what is important to us, and we will naturally be motivated to pursue such matters. Our emphasis will show us what is in our heart (*Matthew 6:20-21*). As Jesus said what is in our heart will naturally come out in our words (*Matthew 15:17-20*). It is easy to know people's emphasis because it is what they talk about the most. Once you identify what a person talks about the most, it will be easy enough to see him or her pursue it. Pursuits are often identified by the type of fruits that they produce. The Apostle Paul stated what the heart of his motive was in *Philippians 3:7-8*, "But what things were gain to

me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." He then goes on to expound on his pursuit, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death (*Philippians 3:10*).

Jesus declared that the only right motive is a love for God and the love of God towards others (*Matthew 22:37-40*). This love can only come from God, and according to the Apostle Paul must be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit and is the only way to fulfill the law of God (*Romans 5:5; 13:8-10*). When a person loves God with all of his or her heart, his or her pursuit will be to know Him more, please Him most, and serve Him best (*John 14:15*).

When it comes to religious matters you will find out that people's emphasis either becomes their *calling* or their *cause*. Many are called but few are chosen (*Matthew 20:16*). Those who are called must be prepared to walk it out, but sadly many people in the ministry are not patient enough to allow themselves to go through the preparation to ensure they are able to properly fulfill their calling. Moses spent 40 years in the wilderness and Jesus, the Son of God, spent 99 percent of his first 30 years in obscurity before His ministry started. His mission on earth lasted a little over three years. Man wants to trust three minutes of experience with God to keep his immature zeal going for a lifetime of service. The Apostle Paul warned about propping up the pride of novices in *1 Timothy 3:6*, and making them targets of Satan. It does not matter how zealous or how needed a novice might be in the work of the kingdom, he or she must first be properly trained before being placed in any position.

I have been in full-time ministry for almost three decades and I have spent most of that time in preparation, seeking God's perspective, studying His Word, and asking the Holy Spirit to teach me the lessons of my failures. I have also had to learn to discern between my calling and my personal causes. Christians can have great zeal for personal causes such as certain doctrines, teachings, or schools of thought, but such emphasis has to do with converting people to the person's personal take on God's Word and religion and not to the person of Jesus.

We are to grow in the knowledge of Jesus, not according to man's personal take on religious issues. Keep in mind, the Holy Spirit's main responsibility is to lead people into all truth about Jesus and not about the personal beliefs of those who may have a cause (*John 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 2:27*). I have watched causes strip people of their authority when it comes to the Word because it is not about what is true and right; rather, it is about the person proving he or she is right about the issue. I had to learn the only way that I could discern my causes from the cause of the Gospel (salvation of souls and discipleship) was to discern if the big "I" of my personal agendas were out of the way and that my main desire was to see Jesus lifted up so others could be saved and fall in love with Him (*John 12:32*).

As believers we are here to point people to Christ so they can be converted to Him, not point them to our pet doctrines or causes. The passion we often feel for our causes should be transferred to the Lord and our emphasis on our particular take on a matter must be tested in light of the whole counsel of the Word of God to ensure that it lines up to the heart of God. As we are reminded, we are to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, and not by some man-made effort of picking and choosing from the Word of God according to what fits a personal narrative (*Matthew 4:4*). It is important to note that the Holy Spirit will only anoint that which lifts up Jesus and His work of redemption in unadulterated truth.

The second aspect of spirit is the

*intent* behind something. Intent points to **priorities** and comes down to our determinations. What are we determined to accomplish or bring about in the end? *Jeremiah 29:11* reveals God's intentions towards us, "*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.*" We know God's intention towards us is pure, but in the carnal man, determinations are hard to discern because they can be wrapped up in a type of piousness that covers up any self-serving intentions. The underlying intention of the carnal man is to bring some type of honor and recognition to himself. The truth is fallen man wants to feel good in his sin, justify his transgression with the blame game, and cover up his iniquity with pious appearances and self-serving deeds. Such a man is looking to get something out of what he says and does, and if he does not receive his intended end, he will become treacherous in his dealings.

It is for this reason that we are told in *Hebrews 4:12*, "*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner to the thoughts and intents of the heart.*" Notice, the Word of God will penetrate the excuses, cut away deceptive cloaks, and reveal the deceptive thoughts of our hearts. It will expose our real intention in a situation. The Apostle Paul revealed his heart-felt intention in *Galatians 2:20*, "*I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*"

The final aspect of spirit has to do with our goals which determine our **focus** and **direction** in a matter. Our goals may be honorable but if our motives and intentions are not, it will bring confusion and defeat in our lives. It is important that we discern if our motives and intentions are lining up to honorable goals. People who are divided in their soul about such matters will become double-minded in all their ways (*James 1:8*).

The main goal of the Spirit is to

lead us into a place of true communion and worship, but the main goal of the wrong spirit is to cause man to worship Satan (*Matthew 4:8-10*). The real key to discerning any spirit is who is being lifted up and exalted. If a person comes out being impressed with anyone or anything other than the Lord, a wrong spirit has been in operation.

To maintain a unified spirit and soul in relationship to our spiritual lives, we need to discern what our motives and intentions are towards God. It is easy to start out right and ever so slightly move away from the Lord. We need to take stock of the spirit we are operating in and our reactions to matters in order to maintain the clarity of our discernment.

In *Luke 9:52-56*, James and John wanted to call fire down from heaven upon the Samaritans because they would not receive Jesus. However, Jesus' motive was that He did not come to judge but to save and He rebuked the two brothers in *Luke 9:55* by saying, "*Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.*"

It is hard for man to realize that logic will not do well for him when it comes to the spiritual realm. He must learn to discern even the spirit he is operating within. There are three spirits in operation in the world as I have already mentioned: The *Holy Spirit*, the *natural spirit*, and the *spirit of the world*, Satan (*1 Corinthians 2:11-14*). When we consider James and John in *Luke 9*, they took offense for Jesus and ended up operating according to their natural spirits. They were assuming much about their righteous indignation and I am sure were surprised when Jesus rebuked them instead of admiring their zealous commitment to take offense for Him.

I can't tell you how many immature Christians, and even some of the more mature Christians, fall into this trap of taking offense for the Lord and then decide to take matters in their own hands to somehow right it. God does not need people to take offense for Him or to take matters into their own hands to make sure it comes out right, while thinking they are doing God a favor. God's thoughts and ways are higher and far more excellent and eternal than our low-based thoughts of this present age and our

self-serving ways (*Isaiah 55:8-9*). The only thing we are to stand for is His truth in meekness (*2 Timothy 2:25*).

It is because we sometimes, as believers, operate in a fickle state (between the spirit and the flesh) that we must not assume we are always conducting ourselves in a right way when it comes to taking some type of noble stand for religious causes; but, we must consider what spirit we are operating in because it will determine how we perceive things, handle truths, and the fruits that will be produced. It is natural for people to assume that if something makes sense it must be okay, but discernment is not about what sounds logical, appears reasonable, and fits into our personal narrative. Discernment is about effectively testing the unseen realm of the spiritual world.

Last month I talked about the Holy Spirit. Unless we understand His character and work, we cannot properly discern Him. Without His presence and work in individual believers and in the church (assembly), nothing will be accomplished in light of eternity. The Spirit always leaves the mark of eternity on His work and dealings.

It is also important to note that only the Spirit of God can enable believers to discern what is of God and what is of the wrong spirit. It is for this reason that unregenerate man will rely on his intellect, his feelings, and his personal take on matters to draw conclusions. However, the Bible is clear that man cannot trust conclusions that are based on his own understanding. *Proverbs 3:5-7*, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil."

We must seek the Lord's perspective, knowing that only the unseen can only be revealed by the Spirit to the eyes of faith and the pure heart. We must be able to recognize the intent of God concerning a spiritual matter because in His intent His will, will be revealed. God's motive is love and His intention is reconciliation, but His goal is to save us. The intent of His Spirit is to bring glory to God and His goal is to lift up Jesus to draw each of us to the Lover of our soul.

The first thing we must acknowledge about the Holy Spirit is that He is not some type of "force"; rather, He is a person. *Daniel 11:38* states, "But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones and pleasant things." Sadly, the god of forces is being promoted today. In reality he is the god of this world posing as the New Age god that promotes collective salvation (a type of universalism), a social gospel, and a Gnostic approach which tolerates amoral conduct while promoting enlightenment as the way of salvation. The Holy Spirit is missing from this anti-Christ agenda and will have no part in any of it.

As a person the Holy Spirit has a personality that allows us to know and interact with Him. As far as the throne of God, the Holy Spirit reveals only what He hears from the throne, but when it comes to the gifts, He will give such gifts as He so wills (*John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11*).

He did not come to promote Himself or His work; rather, He came to exalt Jesus and point man to His redemption, righteousness, and the judgment to come. He is the gift sent by the Son and the promise given by the Father. His presence can be sensed by open, receptive hearts, but not calculated by the intelligence of man; His work must be submitted to, not reasoned out; His touch must be discerned and not blindly experienced because there is some type of supernatural aspect attached to it. He is holy; therefore, the profane will cause Him to withdraw. He inspires greatness but is easily vexed by rebellion. He is gentle; therefore, He can be easily resisted with unbecoming attitudes and conduct that will grieve Him. He brings comfort, but His type of peace can be misread or abused, ultimately quenching Him and producing negative fruits. He can't be lied to without judgment, or mocked without dancing close to blasphemy, and ignored and rejected without experiencing a lifeless vacuum in the soul (*Isaiah 63:10; Matthew 12:25-31; Luke 24:49; John 14:26; 16:7-11; Acts 1:4; 5:4, 9; 2:38; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20*).

The Holy Spirit is the sole inspira-

tion and source behind all that is pure, good, and righteous. *Romans 14:17* states, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is easy to debate the spirit behind our activities, but if it does not produce righteousness, peace, and joy then it is safe to conclude the Holy Spirit is not in a matter. Notice how righteousness comes first, then peace with God producing joy in the Holy Spirit.

Next month I will deal with the other two spirits, but meanwhile, consider asking the Lord for discernment so you can try the spirits of others and effectively examine the spirit you are operating in. ✠

## COMMENTS

"I'm so thankful that you Gals DO NOT balk when addressing TRUTH! I pray that those who are carrying The Law on their back will have the eyes of their understanding opened wide by the article. May God soften their spirit to receive His Truth." - FL

"We serve a 'tell it like it is' Lord!!! Thank GOD He never changes!" - FL [And] I have additional comments about the SUPERB August NL, but the tithing section was especially SUPERB! Well done!!!! This subject was one of the first ones I addressed when I began writing articles for my web site:

<http://yadbyad.messengers-of-messiah.org/Payment%20To%20God/payment.htm>

"As time moves on towards the end of the church age, God sheds more and more light on who He is and the nations he has actually touched with his Word -- such as China for instance. . . ." - WA

"I think that is God's plan [In response to the comment, "The real Church is going underground"] at least for now. Then we'll see who's who in the zoo ..... rather than who wants to be a star to the world! Underground, out of necessity, to hear clearly from the Spirit of God, rather than being side-railed by the many voices being heard 'round the world, that are trying to STEAL the vibrancy of the Believers." - FL

## “IT JUST ISN’T WORTH IT”

By Jeannette Haley

*“And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God”. – Luke 16:15*

If you love a good yard or garage sale like we do, then you have probably experienced the happy feeling that comes from finding super great deals on things you were searching for. Most folks who go to all the work of setting up a yard sale seem to have a built in “instinct” as to how much money people will pay for different items. But, there are always those sellers who hold out for next to top-dollar for their stuff. Maybe that works in some locales, but in the communities in which we have lived, people are looking for real bargains and if things are overpriced they will conclude that “it just isn’t worth it” and move on to a better hunting ground.



One way or the other, everything comes with a price. Neglect your health, job, vehicle, house, property, or anything else and sooner or later there will be a price to pay. Neglect your responsibilities to the people in your life whether young or old, the animals that depend on you, or your civil duties to your neighbors and the Lord will deem you to be “wicked” regardless of whether you go to church or consider yourself to be “spiritual.” (See *Proverbs 10:20; 12:10; 21:29; Psalm 66:18.*)



This is especially true when it comes to neglecting our life in Christ. *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him” Hebrews 2:3?* This “great

salvation” that has been given to us by God is a possession that can be let go *“if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven” Hebrews 12:25.* What many Christians fail to realize is that, even though they may have “accepted” Jesus, they still have their own free will, which means they can decide that following Jesus and living for Him “just isn’t worth it” and turn back to the world. Just because a person buys a ticket to climb aboard the ship, that doesn’t mean that they can’t jump overboard if they change their mind. What we need to remember as we witness different stages in a person’s life is that God always looks at the heart.

Tragically, we know people who, for different reasons, have “jumped ship.” Whether they will someday be convicted and repent, or continue on in unbelief and sin, only God knows. Unfortunately, the preaching today of “easy believism” and “cheap grace” fails to make it clear that there is a price to pay, not to be born again, but to live the Christian life by being converted to the ways of righteousness. This is what Jesus meant when He said to Peter, after telling him that he would deny he even knew Him three times, *“But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” Luke 22:32.* [Emphasis added.] 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.* What is the price? The answer is your very life. Jesus 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” vs. 24, 25?* The Apostle Paul said, *“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” 1 Corinthians 9:27.* Jesus warned, *“No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” Luke 9:62.* We all need to remember what happened to Lot’s wife, *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” Matthew 6:21.*

People generally follow their heart. If the world is in their heart, and

their heart is in the world, and if they have no true inclination to obey what *Colossians 3:2* admonishes, *“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth,”* then instead of their priorities being spirit, soul, and body, their priorities will line up this way: body, soul, and spirit. Their motivation will be “me, myself, and I” instead of God, others, and, last, myself. Such people love themselves enough to not want to spend a Christless eternity in hell, but on the other hand, they absolutely do not want to forfeit their love for the things of the world either. This attitude results in a tormenting upheaval of emotional and mental conflict as people caught in such a dilemma wrestle with how to “have their cake and eat it too”; how to have a guarantee of heaven someday while pursuing the world in this life. Jesus explained, *“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” Matthew 22:13.*

The key is we must examine our own hearts, not through introspection; that is, looking into ourselves, but with honest spiritual evaluation of our fruits. Do we truly love God with our whole heart, or have we concluded that He “just isn’t worth it?” Our fruits will reveal the answer to us. Jesus made it clear, *“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” Matthew 7:16-20.* Paul wrote, *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates” 2 Corinthians 13:5?*

Someone may protest, “Not every Christian can leave everything behind to follow Christ in order to serve Him.” True, but *“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth*

peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth" *Isaiah 52:7!* God expects every believer wherever he or she may find themselves to put God first. In other words, have your priorities in order. Jesus said, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these" *Mark 12:30, 31*. Therefore, wherever you are planted, whether in the city, the country, on sea or on land, along the highways and byways, whether single, or married, free or in prison, healthy or infirm, to the best of your ability with the help of the Holy Spirit, always "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" *Matthew 5:16*.

On the subject of the servant's primary goal, Oswald Chambers gives this valuable insight: "It requires a conscious decision and effort to keep our primary goal constantly in front of us. It means holding ourselves to the highest priority year in and year out; not making our first priority to win souls, or to establish churches, or to have revivals, but seeking only 'to be well pleasing to Him.' It is not a lack of spiritual experience that leads to failure, but a lack of working to keep our eyes focused and on the right goal. At least once a week examine yourself before God to see if your life is measuring up to the standard He has for you. Paul was like a musician who gives no thought to audience approval, if he can only catch a look of approval from his Conductor.

"Any goal we have that diverts us even to the slightest degree from the central goal of being 'approved to God' (2 Timothy 2:15) may result in our rejection from further service for Him. When you discern where the goal leads, you will understand why it is so necessary to keep 'looking unto Jesus' (Hebrews 12:2). Paul spoke of the importance of controlling his own body so that it would not take him in the wrong direction. He said, 'I discipline my body and bring it into subjec-

tion, lest . . . I myself should become disqualified' (1 Corinthians 9:27).

"I must learn to relate everything to the primary goal, maintaining it without interruption. My worth to God publicly is measured by what I really am in my private life. Is my primary goal in life to please Him and to be acceptable to Him, or is it something less, no matter how lofty it may sound?"

We are all "building the houses of our lives" by every decision we make whether it is based upon the Word of God, or the so-called "wisdom of this world." In the end, the rain will descend, the floods will come, and the winds will blow and beat upon our life's foundation. Those who have paid the price of self-denial, losing their lives for Christ's sake by rejecting the ways of the world, the flesh and the devil, will stand because they built their house upon the Rock. But, for the negligent who think within themselves that "it just isn't worth it" Jesus says, "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" *Matthew 7:26, 27*.

Humanly speaking, what does our life consist of that we esteem so highly that it can cause us to neglect our salvation? The Apostle John wrote, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" *1 John 2:15, 16*. John is speaking of the systems of the world, which are not of God, but are of Satan who is "the god of this world" *2 Corinthians 4:3, 4*. Proof of that is as near as the daily news which we can see, hear or read. Today we have self-serving politics and economic systems, war, anarchy, terror, violence, hatred, murders, abortions, lawlessness, conspiracies, lies, gross immorality, godlessness, atheism, idolatry, chicanery, occultism, cults, lewdness, fornication, evil imaginations, addictions, earth worship and every other thing that

brought about the great flood in Noah's day where only eight souls and those animals that God shut into the ark were spared.

We may be able to somewhat understand how natural it is for the ungodly to lust after fame and fortune, while highly esteeming the things of this world, but it is frightening and tragic when professing believers "neglect their salvation" through disobedience to the Word because they are lusting and longing for the world, while secretly concluding that the cost of following Jesus "just isn't worth it." In the back of their mind the price is "too high" if it involves anything more than going to a "predictable" and "friendly" church that weekly offers a watered-down sermon on doctrine that never challenges, convicts or cramps their casual lifestyle. Such are "cake Christians" who somehow want to "have their cake and eat it too." "Cake Christians" can be compared to the Laodiceans of whom Jesus said, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" *Revelation 3:15, 16*.

God says, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him..." *Deuteronomy 30:19, 20a*. "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word" *1 Kings 18:21*. "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision" *Joel 3:14*. "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve" *Joshua 24:15a*. God is still calling out to the people to make up your mind! Make a decision! Choose this day who you will serve! Get off the fence! Decide! You cannot have your cake and eat it too in the real world.

Lukewarm "cake Christians" will go along for the ride as long as there

are elements to it that serve their purpose; that is, making them feel good about themselves, assuring them that they are “saved by association,” and meeting their “felt needs” by way of acceptance, flattery, and “positive” reinforcement. People who settle for low-level, nominal “Christianity” are rendered, by the god of this world, deaf and blind to the Spirit and Truth that screams at them from every page of the Holy Bible. How fitting are the following Scriptures! *Ezekiel 12:1, 2, “The word of the LORD also came unto me, saying, Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not: they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house.” Matthew 13:15, “For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”*

There are many examples of people in Scripture who thought that it just wasn’t worth it to follow Jesus. One such person was the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and asked, *“Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.”* This is an example of a “cake Christian” that will go along with some of the commandments because they don’t affect where his or her heart truly is; but, when Jesus put His finger on his riches, giving him a choice between his riches or his life in Christ, he went away very sad because to him the price was too high to pay. He possessed a divided heart, and to him the price to be Jesus’ disciple just wasn’t worth it.

Many of Jesus’ disciples

(students) turned away from Him after He preached to them about the truly consecrated life. (See *John 6*.) It just wasn’t worth it to them. Their hearts refused to be enlarged to embrace the true Manna from heaven. *“Then said Jesus to the twelve, Will ye also go away?”* This is one of the saddest questions in the whole Bible, yet Jesus is still asking that question today. Those who tell Him, “It just isn’t worth it” are actually saying, “You just aren’t worth it.” Let’s face it, if a person rejects the price of total consecration—a fully surrendered life of self-denial, commitment, dedication, obedience and love for Jesus, what he or she is really saying to Him is, “I want to go to heaven, but as for the price I have to pay—You just aren’t worth it.”

When it comes to the example Judas Iscariot has left us, we see a man whose true heart condition was revealed in *John 12:1-8*. Judas had been chosen by Jesus to be one of the twelve disciples, where for over three years he had been taught and trained by the Lord Himself, witnessed Jesus’ miracles, and had even tasted of the power of the Holy Spirit, yet he still was not fully surrendered to God. Deep down and in the “back of his mind” he had his own ideas, doubts, and agendas. Pride reigned. *“Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.”*

Being truly converted to the ways of righteousness was not on Judas’ agenda, but pretending that he was “religious” and cared for the poor afforded him the opportunity to steal. Jesus defended Mary, *“Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought*

*a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her” Mark 14: 6-9.* Rebuking Judas, and exalting a “mere” woman in front of others instead of exalting and commending Judas, brought out his true colors. *“And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them” Mark 14:10.* So we see that, on the one hand, there was Mary who poured out the precious, valuable ointment upon the Son of God because she knew He was eternally beyond “worth it,” and there was Judas whose self-centered heart condemned Him because to Judas He “just wasn’t worth it.”

Finally we come to Demas who was a “fellowlabourer” with Paul. Sadly, in *2 Timothy 4:10* we can feel Paul’s disappointment as he penned the words, *“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica ....”* Being a servant of the living Lord and laboring with the Apostle Paul for eternal rewards “just wasn’t worth it” to this man whose heart loved the world. *James 4:4* warns, *“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”*

Jesus made it clear that a person can only serve one Master at a time. The professing Christian who has deluded him or herself into thinking that he or she can somehow serve both Jesus and the world is declaring that the true Christian life, and the Son of God Himself “just isn’t worth it.” This world is full of people, who have, by their attitudes, philosophies, belief systems, priorities, and lifestyles come to the conclusion, either consciously or unconsciously, that loving God, following Jesus, and living according to His Word “just isn’t worth it.” *“Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas” John 18:40a.* If you listen, you can

hear the same cry today by the majority of lost mankind. The whole world trembles as multitudes cry, "Not this man, but give us Barabbas!"

What about you? Will you choose this day who you will serve? Will you choose Barabbas, or Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God? Is He worth it to you? †

Have you come to His cross,  
Seen His suffering and shame,  
Looked into his eyes,  
As He whispered your name?  
Have you come to His cross,  
Looked upon God's Sacrifice for sin,  
Opened your heart, and let Him in?  
Have you come to His cross,  
Watched Him suffer and die,  
As His eyes searched your soul,  
Did you turn and say, "Goodbye"?  
Have you come to His cross,  
To search for another way,  
Because the price of Lordship  
Is too high to pay?  
Have you come to His cross,  
Did your heart melt, and repent,  
Or did it become hardened,  
For He "just isn't worth it"?



*"I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, According to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, And the great goodness towards the house of Israel, Which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, And according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. For he said, Surely they are my people, Children that will not lie: So he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, And the angel of his presence saved them: In his love and in his pity he redeemed them; And he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: Therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." Isa. 63:1-10*

*"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." - Matthew 12:31*

## A WORD FROM JONI EARECKSON TADA

*"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior." Habakkuk 3:17-18*

This guy had it bad! Can you imagine being a farmer and waking up one morning to see your fig trees and vines bare, the olive orchard dead, the fields barren, and all the sheep and cattle gone? If I were the farmer surveying the scene of devastation, I might have a difficult time rejoicing in the Lord.

But not Habakkuk. He knew that the time to trust God in triple measure was during those days when "everything bad happens at once!"

Ever had a day when everything that could go wrong does go wrong? The alarm doesn't ring, the shower runs cold, a button pops, the sink plugs up, a light bulb blows out, the dog escapes the yard, and the telephone goes dead (someone forgot to pay the bill!). You could handle the irksome problems individually, if they were spaced apart a bit. But your sanity unravels when irritations and inconveniences pile on at once.

Habakkuk had such a day. What's worth noting is that he not only trusted in God in the midst of topsy-turvy disappointments, but he determined to also put a smile on his face. So the question is not can you trust Him, but...will you?

*God my Savior, You tell me time and again to rejoice in You despite the daily headaches and heartaches. Sometimes it's so hard. But if today happens to see everything unravel at once, empower me not to give in to defeat. Help me to do what Habakkuk did. May I trust You... with a smile.*

*Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our LORD: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.— Nehemiah 8:10*

## CHARLES FINNEY CHALLENGING QUOTES

In desires for the conversion of souls; the true saint because it will glorify God; the deceived person to gain the favor of God.

To glorify God; the true saint because he loves to see God glorified, and the deceived person because he knows that is the way to be saved. The true convert has his heart set on the glory of God, as his great end, and he desires to glorify God as an end, for its own sake. The other desires it as a means to his great end, the benefit of himself.

To repent. The true convert abhors sin on account of its hateful nature, because it dishonors God, and therefore he desires to repent of it. The other desires to repent, because he knows that unless he does repent he will be damned.

To believe in Jesus Christ. The true saint desires it to glorify God, and because he loves the truth for its own sake. The other desires to believe, that he may have a stronger hope of going to heaven.

To obey God. The true saint that he may increase in holiness; the false professor because he desires the rewards of obedience.

They may agree not only in their desires, but in their resolutions. They may both resolve to give up sin, and to obey God, and to lay themselves out in promoting religion, and building up the kingdom of Christ; and they may both resolve it with great strength of purpose, but with different motives.

They may also agree in their designs. They may both really design to glorify God, and to convert men, and to extend the kingdom of Christ, and to have the world converted; the true saint from love to God and holiness, and the other for the sake of securing his own happiness. One chooses it as an end, the other as a means to promote a selfish end.

They may both love Christ. The true convert loves his character, the deceived person thinks he will save him from hell, and give him eternal life, and why should he not love him?

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*Are you a true convert, a true saint?*

## RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

**Q:** *I heard you say once, "Your theology cannot save you." Can you please explain what you mean by that?*

**A:** There are Christians who believe that salvation comes down to what one believes, but the Bible tells us that beliefs will not save a person; rather, salvation solely finds its source in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus said it best in *John 5:39*, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

Many religious people mistakenly associate their salvation to theology, denominations, creeds, and doctrines. They think if they believe something that it must make it so, but for many believing is an intellectual acceptance of something being true instead of a heart revelation that results in inward transformation. Before talking about the transformed mind in *Romans 12:2*, the Apostle Paul made this declaration in *Romans 10:9-10*, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Clearly salvation is a heart revelation and not an intellectual understanding.

In *John 8* a very interesting discussion takes place. In *John 8:30* we are told, "Many believed on him." Jesus went on to challenge those who believed on Him that if they continue in His Word they would be His disciples. He made this infamous statement after exhorting them to continue on in His Word, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (*John 8:32*). It is after Jesus' statement about truth that these people declared, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?"

These people believed on Jesus based on the teachings they could intellectually agree with, but Jesus' statement went contrary to their understanding. Jesus later stated that their father was the devil in *John 8:44* because they did not believe Him.

We can *believe on* Jesus as long as His words fit into our narrative, but the real question is whether we *believe Him* because of who He is. It is only after we believe Him that we are able to believe *in* Him as the only way to truth and life.

As you can see, "believing" entails a short journey that requires genuine faith in order to take it. We must not just come to terms with what we believe (theology), but we must discern who is the true source or foundation of our belief, and whether we are going to choose to believe that all matters originating with our source are true and liberating. Believing is the same as saying, "Amen, so be it, for it is so." In other words, it is a matter that has already been established as truth, thereby, we must not only receive it as so by faith, but we apply it as if it always has been and act on it because we know that it will be so in the end.

It is clear in *John 8* that people's beliefs can prove to be fickle because if such beliefs are not directed towards the person of Jesus, they can easily be taken into the arena of unbelief, not towards personal theology, but towards Jesus.

Most people confuse theology and doctrine, but theology is based on a person's adopted theories about God. These theories may be based on fact and truth, but the real crux is they are one-dimensional and often lack life and authority. Most theology is kept on an intellectual level so that it can be debated to death, but Jesus made clear in *John 6:63* that His words are, "spirit and life."

The Bible speaks much of doctrine, but what is doctrine and how do you know it is the correct doctrine? Doctrine comes down to how a person is supposed to conduct him or herself in a situation. For example, marriage is a doctrine, and in that doctrine husbands are told what is to motivate their attitudes and actions towards their wives and wives are told how to properly honor their husbands in submission.

The Sermon on the Mount is loaded with doctrine (*Matthew 7:28-29*). This sermon clearly reveals that pure doctrine is not just a matter of knowledge alone about Scriptural responsibilities, but of possessing a

right heart attitude that will produce honorable actions towards others. In other words, pure doctrine will become a visible expression of Christ.

Scripturally based theology, like the Law, may point you in the right direction, but it cannot save you (*Galatians 3:24*). After all, our theology was not crucified on a cross for us and the Law did not die on the cross in our place to obtain our redemption. This is why the Bible is clear that Jesus offers the only way to salvation, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (*Acts 4:12*). †

## GEMS by J. C. Ryle

It costs something to be a true Christian. It will cost us our sins, our self-righteousness, our ease and our worldliness!

A Christian is a walking sermon. Christians preach far more than a minister does--for they preach all week long!

According to the men of the world--few are going to Hell. According to the Bible--few are going to Heaven.

Nothing is so offensive to Christ, as lukewarmness in religion!

Beware of manufacturing a God of your own . . . a God who is all mercy--but not just; a God who is all love--but not holy; a God who has a Heaven for everybody--but a Hell for none; a God who will make no distinction between godly and ungodly in eternity. Such a God is an idol of your own--as truly an idol as any snake or crocodile in an Egyptian temple! The hands of your own imagination and sentimentality have made him. He is not the God of the Bible--and beside the God of the Bible, there is no God at all.

Pride is the oldest and most common of sins. Humility is the rarest and most beautiful of graces.

A religion that costs nothing is worth nothing. A cheap Christianity, without a cross, will prove in the end a useless Christianity, without a crown.

Except a man be born again, he will wish one day he had never been born at all.