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PO Box 3572 * Oldtown, ID 83822 * www.gentleshepherd.com * May 2015

THE REALITY OF GOD

Part Eight

By Rayola Kelley

We have been considering who God is. The Bible clearly says if you do not believe God is, you will never be able to please Him (*Hebrews 11:6*). Our faith towards God is not based on what He is able to do, but in who He is. Therefore, any old God will not do, and beliefs that humanize Him and attitudes that casually treat Him as being the "Man upstairs," "the CEO," "the big sugar Daddy in the sky," and and so forth teeter close to blasphemy because they lack proper reverence and fear of God.

Today there are many notions about God, various concepts, ideas, and presentations of God, but are they correct? Romans 1:20 tells us that everyone born into the human



race possesses the knowledge that there is a God and there will be no excuse for unbelief on judgment day. It has been proven that if people's conscience is not betrayed through rebellion and unbelief, seared by the influence of cultures, heretical religious beliefs, and worldly philosophies, that the ingrained sense that this God is moral, just, and holy is still present in such people's minds. These individuals will be convicted when they are morally wrong without being told about God's holy Law, and they also realize that lifestyles must adjust to the excellent character of God. (See the book *Eternity In Their Hearts* by missionary Don Richardson.)

For me, my initial understanding of God was so vague that I had no concept as to who He was. To me He was some force located somewhere out in the universe. The reason for

this vague notion is that my religion had subtly replaced God. Granted, it played off the moral code established by God, but the church became the only way to please God. You pleased God by serving it. Therefore, my association with my church was the source of my salvation, my good works were the means of my salvation, and an outward pious life was to be the seal of that salvation.

Since the presentation of God was idolatrous, it created a spiritual vacuum in my understanding of who He is. My understanding took on the darkness of ignorance that operated according to superstition. The reason for this vacuum is because my former church was simply a demonically inspired, man-made organization that had no feeling or personal involvement with its members. Granted, there were leaders in the church, but members did not have personal knowledge of some supernatural living entity that could relate to their plight. They prayed to God, but if they understood the presentation of God according to the church, He had been humanized and was nothing more than some supernatural being that only amounted to being another god. The leaders could only promote or point to the established beliefs of the church. Committed members were often left with the burden of living some type of pious life without the power to do so. This pious life never really had the capacity to address or take care of wrong attitudes, fleshly desires, and hidden sins. As a result, teen suicides plague my former church, while practices of moral paganism are clearly present, but hidden behind a veneer of false glory and terminology.

When I came face to face with my own inadequacies, I had to face the harsh reality of my sin. I was being condemned by a moral code that went deeper than outward practices touted by my church. I did not realize this moral code belonged to a righteous

God, but I became aware that maybe my actions were not so bad, but my attitude was a disgrace. As the heavy hand of conviction brought me to the end of myself, I knew that only God could suffice my inner turmoil, but I was confused about who He was.

There is only *one way* you can know God. There is only *one true revelation* of God, and there is only *one source* that will bring proper instruction about God, His Word. *John 4:23-24* tells us that the One, True God is Spirit and truth. Therefore, the only way you can know God is through His Spirit. The Bible is clear that the Holy Spirit is the only way in which people can come to the knowledge of the true God (*Matthew 16:15-17; John 16:13*). In fact it is the Holy Spirit that brings life to the written Scriptures (*John 6:63*). Sadly, most people approach God through fleshly means such as intelligence and sentiment and through religious influences such as doctrine and theology. However, the flesh will produce another God and religion will cause truths about God to become dead-letter, ineffective, and a burdensome duty that demands works as a means to please God, and not faith towards God (*Romans 7:6; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 10:3-5; 11:1-14; Galatians 3:1-16*).

There is only one true revelation about God that has been clearly revealed to mankind. This revelation is not a principle, a doctrine, or a matter of theology. The shadow of this revelation was cast in the Old Testament, but was unveiled in the New Testament. This revelation is a person, the Lord Jesus Christ (*Revelation 1:1*). Jesus said He is the way (to salvation, reconciliation with God), He is the truth (about God and man's plight), and He is the life (that possesses the very power of resurrection) (*John 14:6*).

As the unseen hand of conviction weighed heavily upon my soul, I wrestled with the reality of God. I knew

about prayer, but my prayers hit dead air. I did not know where to turn. I knew that my church had caused confusion about God; therefore, there was no use turning to it. Slowly the light of the Gospel of Jesus began to dawn on me as different people shared the message of Jesus dying for my sins, being buried with them, and then rising three days later, proving that the wages of sin, which is death (spiritual separation from God), had finally been paid in full. The glorious message penetrated the darkness of my soul and began to reveal the work of the cross of Christ: as my sacrifice He died in my place in order to address the sin that was besetting me, to take it away once and for all, and bring forgiveness, cleansing, and healing to my weary, embattled conscience (*Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Hebrews 10:10-22*).

My initial experience of salvation (the born again experience) revived my lifeless spirit with the Spirit of the living God and restored my dead soul with the life of His Son. It was both sweet and glorious, but it simply represented the first step that would lead me to my own cross and the crucifixion of my old life, and the demise of the old man in me. It was a journey that would lead me to priceless truths about my God, the unveiling of His character, ways, and life through His Son.

My primary understanding of God made Him vague because He had no form, no face, and no personality. I was sure that He probably was a good God, but there was nothing to measure Him with. When something stands alone in its class, it seems far away, too good to be true, and too unobtainable to mess with. When I learned that Jesus was God clothed in humanity, I could begin to relate to God because He took on the form of a servant. He now had a face because He was fashioned in the likeness of man and now I could observe His personality in the ways and example of Jesus Christ (*Philippians 2:5-8*). I could handle Him like John, touch Him like the woman with the issue of blood, and relate to Him on a personal level (*1 John 1:1-3*). It was clear that I could personally know God through Jesus (*John 14:9-13*).

Jesus is the God/Man. He is the

fullness of the Godhead in bodily form (*Colossians 2:9*). This is the one truth almost every cult trips over. Some people reason if Jesus is God then they will never be able to please Him. Others believe if Jesus is man, there is no way that God could be pleased with what He did on the cross. Both attitudes fail to realize that as God, Jesus became the ladder extended from heaven in which all blessings would flow down to man in the form of grace, and as Man, He became the bridge, lifted up by the cross and verified by His deity, to become the path of reconciliation back to God. If Jesus was not both God and Man there would be no cross extended upward and outward to bring man back into a relationship with the living God. It is true that no mere man could please God in his fallen state, and no righteous God could settle for anything that did not maintain the character of His holiness and Law. However, God is clearly being limited by these erroneous ways of thinking. I can only ask is God too small to take on a body, or is He too big, indifferent, and elite to become identified with mankind in his plight?

If man could not solve his spiritual problem, then it only makes sense that God had to solve it. Although He could have stepped outside of creation to create a special man to be a sacrifice, such a man would fail to fulfill the prophecies found in Scripture. It is clear that the Promised Messiah and Redeemer had to come from the earthly lineage of Abraham, Jesse, and David. *Hebrews 2:14-17* explains that Jesus had to be a partaker of flesh and blood so that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, the devil. Then it goes on to say, "*For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.*"

The truth is Jesus as God had to take on an earthly body to become God's holy, righteous and acceptable Passover Lamb in order to pay the price for our redemption in His human body (*John 1:29*). As the Bible declares, there is only one Savior and Redeemer of mankind and that is Je-

hovah God (*Isaiah 44:24; 45:21-22; 47:4*). Jesus could not be Savior or Redeemer unless He is God!

To the carnal mind Jesus being both God and Man seems ridiculous, to the heretical religious mind, it is confusion that is often used to validate the heretic's own twist on Scripture, and to the unbelieving, it is a way to discredit the validity of the Bible altogether. However, the Spirit will confirm the truth of Jesus through Scripture if one approaches it to believe the Word of God is truth.

It is important to first establish Jesus' deity in order to understand the significance in recognizing Him as Lord (Adonai). The Bible is clear one must confess Jesus is Lord to validate salvation (*Romans 10:9-10*). According to the Companion Bible, Adonai is used in three ways: *Adon* in relationship to Jesus being overlord or ruler, *Adonim* has to do with Jesus being our owner, and *Adonai* is used in relationship to Jesus being the one who blesses us. The question is do Scriptures verify Jesus as being Lord in all three categories?

Let us take Adon. Is Jesus the overlord or ruler over all? The answer is yes! In *Revelation 1:8*, Jesus is referred to as the Almighty; possessor of all power to rule and reign in righteousness. In *Revelation 19:15*, when Jesus returns, displaying the wrath of the Almighty God, He will be wearing a vesture that states, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. We know the kingdom of darkness is subject to Jesus and one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (*Philippians 2:10-11*).

It is important to note what it means to scripturally confess something. It means to actually make a type of contract between two parties to show total agreement. This contract requires one to speak what he or she agrees with by making an admission that something is so, as well as make assent to it in terms of complete surrender. When you consider *Philippians 2:11* in light of the meaning of confession, it brings to the forefront the intensity of what will be happening at this point. Everyone who refuses to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord in this present age, will in the next age have to come into agreement with God

about His Son. They will bow in complete surrender to the reality of who Jesus is, and they will open their mouth to admit what is true, that Jesus Christ is Lord over all!

Is Jesus our owner? Jesus made this statement in *Matthew 20:28*, “*Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*” “Ransom” points to a payment being made on behalf of someone who has been taken captive. Another word that can be used in the place of ransom is redemption. In this text, redemption points to buying something back. It is a monetary term.

Throughout Scripture we can see where God continually redeemed His people from some form of bondage, such as Egypt. As a result, those who have been redeemed belong to God. In a legal sense they are now His servants. They are obliged to serve in His household, to do His bidding, to obey Him. It is for this reason we read the warning in *Matthew 7:21-23* that not everyone who declares Jesus is Lord will be recognized on that day because they failed to do the will of the Father.

The Bible is clear that we have been bought with a price (*1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23-24*). We have been redeemed from the taskmaster of sin and saved from the consequences of death. It is not unusual to hear what Jesus has saved people from, but very few talk about what Jesus saved them to: a life of servitude in the house of the Lord. We do not belong to ourselves, and have no right to call our own shots. We have the seal of the Holy Spirit upon us, we have been given our marching orders in the Word of God, and we have been told how to conduct ourselves, as well as the affairs of God. If we fail to uphold our end because we are a casual or rebellious servant who has failed to love our Lord in the manner He is worthy of receiving, in the end it will not go well for us when we have to face Him.

Is Jesus the One who blesses us? He is the ladder in which all blessings flow to us by way of God’s grace (*Genesis 28:12-13*, refer to *John 1:50-51; 1:16-17*). *Philippians 4:19* tells us, “*But my God shall supply all your need according to his rich-*

es in glory by Christ Jesus.” He became sin for us so we could be made in the righteousness of God. It is in Jesus’ name that God will answer our prayers according to His will. The Bible is clear that Jesus is to become our all in all, for He is in all matters concerning heaven and ultimately will be found in all that is stamped with God’s approval (*2 Corinthians 5:21; John 14:14-15; 1 John 5:14; Colossian 3:11*).

The question is, is Jesus Christ Adonai to you? It is easy to say Lord, but a whole different matter when it comes to Him ruling as Lord in your life. It is vital that we honestly examine our attitude and life in light of Jesus’ Lordship. After all, if He is not Lord of our life, He cannot claim us as belonging to Him. †

THE MASTER OF THE WORLD

By Milburn Cockrell (1941-2002)

“Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth! Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might!”
1 Chronicles 29:11-12

In these days of man-centered religion, verses like these have been ignored. The pulpits of our land preach a defeated God, a disappointed Christ and a defenseless Holy Spirit. Man has been deified—and God dethroned. God has been relegated to the background.

The God most people believe in has benevolent intentions, yet He is unable to carry them out. He wants to bless men, but they will not let Him. The average church-goer thinks Satan has gained the upper hand, and that God is to be pitied rather than worshiped. The god of popular Christianity has a weak smile and a halo!

To suppose in the slightest that God has failed, or that He has been defeated, is the height of foolishness and the depth of impiety! The religious world needs to get God off the charity list!

The Bible knows nothing of a defeated, disappointed, and defenseless God. The God of the Bible is the

“Almighty God” (*Genesis 17:1*) Who has all power in Heaven and on earth (*Matthew 28:18*). With Him nothing is impossible (*Luke 1:37*) or too hard (*Jeremiah 32:17*). His eternal purpose is being worked out. Everything is going according to His plan, and all things are under His control.

The God of the Bible is the Supreme Being in the universe! He is the most High, higher than the highest. He has no superiors and no equals. God is God. He does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases.

“He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? What His soul desires, even that He does” (*Job 23:13*). Agreeing with this is *Psalms 115:3*: “*But our God is in the heavens: He has done whatever He has pleased.*” As the Master of the World He declares: “*My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure!*” (*Isaiah 46:10*).

God is the Supreme Being and the Sovereign of the universe. He exercises His power as He wills, when He wills, where He wills. “*All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing. But He does according to His will in the host of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth. No one can ward off His hand or say to Him: What have You done?*” (*Daniel 4:35*).

God governs all His creatures and their actions. The events that take place on earth do not take place by chance, or fate, or luck. The so-called accidents are not even incidents with the Master of the World. He numbered the hairs of our head and noted the sparrow’s fall in eternity past by His “*determinate counsel and foreknowledge*” (*Acts 2:23*).

The Master of the World set the bounds of our habitation on earth. The number of our months is with Him, and our days are appointed! God is holding the helm of the universe, and regulating all events. The Master of the World “*works all things after the counsel of His own will*” (*Ephesians 1:11*). It is God’s eternal right to do all His pleasure. He is not accountable to any of His creatures. *Job 33:13* declares: “*He gives no account of any of His matters.*”

God controls all things—or nothing. †

THE LEAST

By Jeannette Haley

“...to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” – Isaiah 66:2b

The biggest, the brightest, the best, and in some cases the “badest” is what usually grips our attention. Man admires “the most,” the majestic, the magnificent, the massive, and the marvelous. People are gripped with overwhelming awe by the magnitude of such things as the Great Pyramid of Giza, which remained the tallest man-made structure in the world for over 3,800 years. Then there is the current world’s impressive tallest artificial structure such as the 2,722 ft. tall Burj Khalifa in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. This building gained the official title of “Tallest Building in the World” at its opening on January 4, 2010. When it comes to manmade structures there is no way to describe, or see in a lifetime, all the great castles, cathedrals, temples, shrines, museums, and monuments found all over the world.

It’s hard to wrap your mind around the “big” populations of the world’s largest cities, beginning with Mexico City with an estimated population of 9 million and Tokyo with a population of 8,949,447, let alone comprehend a world population of over 7 billion souls—people whose every thought is known by God.

When it comes to mountains, everyone knows (with the exception of the know-it-all-couldn’t-care-less types that FOX News frequently interviews on the streets of New York City) that Mount Everest takes the prize at 29,029 feet. If you’ve ever been to Seattle and viewed Mount Rainier in the distance you know how imposing that mountain is—yet Rainier is less than half the height of Everest.

We are impressed with the largest and most powerful rivers, the grandest waterfalls, the highest waves of the ocean, and the monsters that swim in it. Big game hunters aren’t content to go rabbit hunting when they can hunt and kill a wonderful, intelligent animal like an elephant.



Those who are the fastest, the leanest and the meanest in the world of sports are hailed as heroes to the point of blatant idolatry regardless of how they live. Don’t touch that football star, even if he is a wife beater (or wife killer). Sports are king. Besides sports heroes, most “heroes” in our postmodern world are those whom the masses look up to because of their “big names,” not because of the content of their character. Titles, positions, possessions, and popularity are what brand the “elite” as worthy of blind adoration and acclaim. Sadly, this is true in the religious realm as well. People are wowed by mega churches and the people who head them with titles and names that are a household word to thousands. But, consider what Jesus said to the Pharisees, *“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. [Emphasis added.] Jesus said, *“And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”* Matthew 20:27, 28.

Coming back to the big and remarkable again, who can fail to be impressed with God’s magnificent creation in the huge landmasses, and the giant nations of the earth, and beyond that the enormous galaxies, with countless suns and planets that make the earth and our sun look like mere specks in the vastness of space? Truly, our God is a great God. *“Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God”* Isaiah 44:6. What should truly impress us and inspire overwhelming awe in our hearts and minds is the triune God, whose ways are past finding out, who continually amazes us with His infinite wisdom, mighty power and intimate knowledge of all things, great and small, and how He so often uses the “least” to carry out His will. Consider the tiny nation of Israel. How amazing that God would choose and establish such a small place for His chosen people, and for the throne of the King of kings! Why not a whole continent, like Africa?

For example, who of us, if we

could, would use a lowly jackass to speak to a wayward prophet? But, God did. We read in *Numbers 22* how Balaam angered God because he went with his two servants and the princes of Moab at the demand of king Balak. The ass was the only one who saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his sword drawn in his hand, and turned aside out of the way into a field. After hitting his poor ass and turning her back onto the path, she again saw the angel of the LORD, and with nowhere to escape, she thrust herself against a wall, crushing Balaam’s foot. So he hit her again. Then the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no place to turn, and when the ass saw him, she fell down under Balaam. She suffered a beating with his staff, but then the LORD opened her mouth, and she spoke to Balaam. To me, the incredible thing is that Balaam talked back to her! Then the LORD opened Balaam’s eyes so that he could see the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his sword drawn. Balaam bowed down his head, and feel flat on his face. You can read the rest of the story, but the point is, if God can use a humble jackass, He can use you and me if we humble ourselves.

Another story that reveals how God uses the least is found in *Judges 6*. An angel of the LORD came to the place where Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites who were oppressing Israel at that time. *Judges 6:12* says, *“And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.”* When the LORD told him to go and save Israel from the Midianites, Gideon said to Him, *“Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house”* verse 15. Gideon saw himself as being the last person who should be chosen for such a task. But God had chosen him, and God used Him mightily. In this story we see that God whittled Gideon’s men down from 22,000 to a mere 300 to gain the victory. Thus, the Lord used the least by choosing Gideon, and the least number of fighting

men to show Himself mighty lest any man take the glory.

In *1 Samuel 16* we read how Samuel was called by God to go to the house of Jesse in Bethlehem because one out of his eight sons was called by God to be the future king of Israel. When Samuel arrived, and looked upon one of Jesse's eight sons, he assumed he was the Lord's choice for king. *"But the LORD said unto Samuel, 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"* verse 7. Of course we all know that the last son to be called was the young shepherd boy, David. Surely he was at that time considered the least likely candidate for king!

These are just three stories out of many that we find in the Holy Scriptures that give us examples of how God sees the potential in the least, while mankind looks to the "outward appearance" and other worldly considerations when making decisions as to whom is the greatest, and "most likely to succeed." When you consider Jesus' life as Son of Man, the well-known "One Solitary Life" sums it up beautifully: "Let us turn now to the story. A child is born in an obscure village. He is brought up in another obscure village. He works in a carpenter shop until he is thirty, and then for three brief years is an itinerant preacher, proclaiming a message and living a life. He never writes a book. He never holds an office. He never raises an army. He never has a family of his own. He never owns a home. He never goes to college. He never travels two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He gathers a little group of friends about him and teaches them his way of life. While still a young man, the tide of popular feeling turns against him. One denies him; another betrays him. He is turned over to his enemies. He goes through the mockery of a trial; he is nailed to a cross between two thieves, and when dead is laid in a borrowed grave by the kindness of a friend.

"Those are the facts of his human life. He rises from the dead. Today we look back across nineteen hundred years and ask, What kind of

trail has he left across the centuries? When we try to sum up his influence, all the armies that ever marched, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned are absolutely picayune in their influence on mankind compared with that of this one solitary life..." (*I understand that this is the original essay by Dr James Allan Francis in "The Real Jesus and Other Sermons" © 1926 by the Judson Press of Philadelphia (pp 123-124 titled "Arise Sir Knight!")*).

In spite of all evidence to the contrary, it is, nevertheless, only natural for us, as fallen human beings, to assume that God thinks like we think and that what impresses us must surely impress God. This type of thinking is the mental launching pad that propels us onto the wrong road of detours, darkness, error, and even destruction. Such a road is not one that any of us should desire to travel on, yet many stubbornly insist on continuing down this treacherous road that sooner or later dead ends in the ditch of delusion. God says, *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"* Isaiah 55:9.

God's ways are so amazing and wondrous that they thrill the soul, encourage the heart, inspire the mind, and edify the spirit. Even so, His ways are the polar opposite of our normal way of doing things. While mankind is naturally competitive and strives for greater achievements in order to impress, God's ways usually go unnoticed and involve what most overlook or ascribe as being unimportant, of no consequence, obscure, weak, and the very least of the least. If you compare the normal human response to life's challenges to God's ways, you discover that His ways are simple yet profound, and most often involve the least. I love the inspiration of the Apostle Paul who put it this way in *1 Corinthians 1:25-31*: *"Because the foolishness 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."

The idea that God highly esteems what we highly esteem is the essence of pride. Until we learn to humble ourselves under the hand of Almighty God, our pride will continue to blind us as to what constitutes true greatness in the Kingdom of God. *"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones"* Isaiah 57:15. What a glorious truth this is, what a wonderful comfort and encouragement to know that when we consider ourselves to be the least of the least, when we have humbled ourselves before God, when we despise our pride, arrogance, conceit, and love of self the way God despises it, then He will dwell with us, He will revive our spirits, and He will revive the contrite heart. God will lift us up when we fall at His feet in total surrender, knowing that nothing we can ever do, or think can lift us up. Jesus said, *"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven"* Luke 18:14. *"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"* Micah 6:8.

Perhaps you consider yourself to be the least of the least, and someone whom God does not see or even regard. Sometimes you may even feel invisible. But nothing can be further from the truth. Remember what Jesus said, *"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows"* Matthew 10:29-31. Take heart,

for Jesus also said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" *Matthew 25:40b*. Study *Psalms 139* which confirms that God knows all about each of us from our conception to our death. He knows every detail of our lives. *Psalms 138:6* assures us, "Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off."

In closing, the question is are you ready and willing to be considered the least in the Kingdom of God so that God can use you for His glory alone? †

TEST YOUR BIBLE SKILL (The small, the least, the weakest)

1. Who put the most into the treasury according to Jesus? (Mk. 12:41-44)
2. Seven people full of honesty, the Holy Spirit and wisdom were appointed to serve the widows in the daily ministrations. Were they men or women? (Acts 6:1-6)
3. What king said he was weak though anointed? (2 Sa. 3:39)
4. Who gloried in his weaknesses? (2 Cor. 12:9, 10)
5. How did God use a rod? (Ex. 4:2)
6. How was a jaw-bone used? (Jud. 15:15)
7. What killed a giant? (1 S. 17:40)
8. A little meal, a little oil became what? (1 K. 17:12)
9. What did a fist-sized cloud become? (1 K. 18:44)
10. What small seed becomes the greatest of all herbs? (Mt. 13:32)
11. What happened to five small barley loaves? (Jn. 6:9)
12. Who did Paul witness to? (Ac. 26:22)
13. What turns great ships? (Ja. 3:4)
14. What is little that boasts great things? (Ja. 3:5)
15. Which tribe of Israel was the smallest? (1 S. 9:21)
16. What were small cords made into? (Jn. 2:15)
17. What was the small round thing in the desert? (Ex. 16:14)
18. Who is to fear the Lord? (Ps. 115:13)
19. What day are we not to despise? (Zec. 4:10)
20. Who was little among the thousands of Judah? (Mi. 5:2)

The Offering Of The Natural By Oswald Chambers

"Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free-woman." *Galatians 4:22*

Paul is not dealing with sin in this chapter of Galatians, but with the relation of the natural to the spiritual. The natural must be turned into the spiritual by sacrifice, otherwise a tremendous divorce will be produced in the actual life. Why should God ordain the natural to be sacrificed? God did not. It is not God's order, but His permissive will. God's order was that the natural should be transformed into the spiritual by obedience; it is sin that made it necessary for the natural to be sacrificed.

Abraham had to offer up Ishmael before he offered up Isaac. Some of us are trying to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God before we have sacrificed the natural. The only way in which we can offer a spiritual sacrifice to God is by presenting our bodies a living sacrifice. Sanctification means more than deliverance from sin, it means the deliberate commitment of myself whom God has saved to God, and that I do not care what it costs.

If we do not sacrifice the natural to the spiritual, the natural life will mock at the life of the Son of God in us and produce a continual swither. This is always the result of an undisciplined spiritual nature. We go wrong because we stubbornly refuse to discipline ourselves, physically, morally or mentally. "I wasn't disciplined when I was a child." You must discipline yourself now. If you do not, you will ruin the whole of your personal life for God.

God is not with our natural life while we pamper it; but when we put it out in the desert and resolutely keep it under, then God will be with it; and He will open up wells and oases, and fulfill all His promises for the natural.

God's command is— Take *now*, not presently. It is extraordinary how we debate! We know a thing is right, but we try to find excuses for not doing it at once. To climb to the height God shows can never be done presently, it must be done now. The sacrifice is gone through in will before it is performed actually.

COMMENTS & LETTERS

"What a bittersweet sorrow. To lose both parents from this worldly being so close together. But what a joy to know that they are together again in a glorious being, one with God their/our Father. It is such a sweet reassurance that we will all again be together wrapped in a love larger than any known. I love that we can picture them in no more pain and with no more sorrow. Removed from their fragile human shells, their light now spreading endless, watching over all those they loved. Please know that you are in all of our prayersWhat a blessing to have found each other in such a, sometimes, crazy world. God bless both of you as you continue to spread God's word and his love through your ministry." - ID

He's one [John Bevere] to be avoided just as much as all of the other deceivers and heretics in the WOF [Word of Faith] CULT and the prosperity [non-]gospel!!!! That's the FEAR FACTOR that they all use submit, or you will be UNCOVERED and bait for Satan!!!" - FL

"Thank you so much for Rayola's devotional book *More Nuggets From Heaven*. It's wonderful! I read it every day along with several others, including Rayola's other devotionals—*Devotions of the Heart 1 & 2*. Such powerful 'nuggets' of truth! May the Lord continue to bless and use you...." - WA

"I got your newsletter, I really enjoy reading them so please keep sending them. I know you work hard on them. They have a lot of good insight about the spiritual world, Christian beliefs, and what the world or people of the world are like. They're interesting to me." - ID

"So appreciate your ministry, we are blessed by it." - ID

"We love you and appreciate all you do for His kingdom and our growth." - MT

"You guys blessed my life deeply and am so glad God crossed our paths." - ID

A SPECIAL THANKS to all of our wonderful friends for your prayers, cards, and love gifts. They are greatly appreciated at this difficult time of loss. GOD BLESS YOU!

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

LYING

Q: Can you explain why God didn't rebuke certain of His people for lying such as King David did to King Achish in 1 Samuel 21?

A: There has been much discussion and debate about the issue of lying among the saints. In fact, lies have been put in different categories from a "little white lie" to a "whopping lie," a "bald-faced lie," and that of a slanderous and destructive lie. These lies are based on the content. For example if you are protecting someone, it is a "little white lie." If you are telling a story about events that have been exaggerated, it is a "whopper." If you come right out and knowingly lie about a dishonorable matter, it is a "bald-faced lie," and if you tell a lie about someone to be divisive because of judgmentalism and jealousy, it is malicious and slanderous. However, does God look at such lies in the same way as we do?

We know Abraham lied about Sarah being his sister in *Genesis 20* because of fear, and almost brought judgment down on an innocent king. It is true that Sarah was his half-sister, but his emphasis on "sister" created a false reality. We could classify Abraham's lie as a "little white lie," but it almost brought reattribution down on an innocent person. There is a saying, "Truth cleverly spoken is the biggest lie yet."

In the case of Isaac in *Genesis 26*, who followed his father's example in claiming his wife was his sister because of fearing for his welfare, it was a bald-faced lie. Rebekah was his cousin, but not his sister. We need to keep in mind that unbridled fear is unbelief. For Abraham, he was taking a spiritual detour at the time of his incident and it is hard to stand steadfast when you do not perceive that you are in the will of God. And, for Isaac, he was later tested in his faith when he found himself fighting over water holes that were rightfully his, but he did manage to pass the test.

There was the case of Rebekah and Jacob misrepresenting Jacob as Esau to Isaac in *Genesis 27*. Her reasoning was that she was trying to protect the integrity of what God had

shown her about Jacob. We must ask do the ends justify the means that are used to accomplish a matter regardless of how right it might seem? To many of our leaders who practice this philosophy, it is proving destructive to our society. There is much mistrust on the part of the citizens towards the intention of the leaders. Did this incident cause a mistrust to develop between Isaac and Rebekah? The Bible does not say. Some Bible teachers maintain that Rebekah paid a high price for her deception; she did not live to see Jacob again. However, I have a problem with this conclusion. God is not a respecter of persons. To me God would have shown like consequences in the cases of Abraham and Isaac. This type of conclusion about Rebekah makes God appear as if he is harder on women than men when it comes to like sins.

One of the things we have to keep in mind is the influence of culture. For example, there are some cultures that embrace lying. During the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Rebekah, most of society was subject to the code of Hammurabi. As I looked at the information I had available about this code, it never addressed actual lying. Since lying is a moral issue that can easily operate in gray areas, one would have to assume that the seriousness of a lie would depend on how badly the conscience was affected by it.

In the case of King David in *1 Samuel 21*, he was giving a false impression in order to save his life. Was his action a matter of wisdom or a lie? At this time the Ten Commandments were in place, but they simply dealt with lying in light of bearing false witness. Clearly, David was not breaking the commandments.

This brings us to the New Testament which declares all liars will not make it to heaven (*Revelation 21:8*). What constitutes a liar? Is it someone who walks in perpetual deception and rejects or refutes truth by insisting on a false reality?

The Bible is clear that there is no darkness of deception in our God and that Satan is the liar, who also murders (*John 8:44; Romans 3:4; 1 John 1:5-7*). Lying is clearly opposite of God and falls in line with Satan. Is lying acceptable when it comes to protecting ourselves from persecution? The Bible

tells us to rejoice if we are being persecuted for the sake of Christ and if we deny Christ before men, He will deny us before the Father (*Matthew 10:32-33*). Is lying acceptable when we are trying to ensure the right outcome? When it comes to God, it is not up to man to bring about the desired outcome, but up to God. Man's responsibility at such times is to trust God with the matters of heaven, while being faithful in doing what he knows is right in his own life.

Finally, what about lying when it comes to protecting others? Jesus' example shows us that when in a tough situation, the best thing to do is either remain silent or put the other person on the defense by asking questions. We never have to volunteer a truth in situations where the welfare of others is on the line, but we need wisdom to avoid lying about a matter. The Bible tells us that we do not have to worry about the type of answer we give because the Spirit of God will give us the words to say. Perhaps that is the answer to our dilemma when it comes to lying in precarious situations. Can we trust God's Spirit and wisdom when it comes to preserving the truth regardless of the situation we might find ourselves in?

Truth and lies represent the black and white of reality, but there are times when the lines are fudged by the greys of emotions, confusion, fear, and uncertainty. We like to think that we would be one who would not betray truth, but the reality is we cannot know something for sure unless we have been tested in it. As a result, we cannot fairly judge those who may succumb to lies because of the situation, but we need to choose our battles wisely, while seeking the wisdom from above and trusting God with the details of the matter to preserve us in truth, maintain us with truth, and guide us with the wisdom of truth to speak what is necessary at the right time in an honorable manner. ✠

RECOMMENDED READING

Humility by Andrew Murray
Jesus, Our Man in Glory by Tozer
Rose's Journey, A Christian in the Holocaust by Myrna Grant
Halina—Faith in the Fire by Elwood McQuaid (Author of *ZVI*)

MARCH MINISTRY IN WASHINGTON

Rayola preaching at Cleft of the Rock Church, Woodinville.



Krista and Carrie ministering in song, Cleft of the Rock Church.



Jeannette in the Chapel of the Resurrection, Bothell, with some of her paintings in the background.

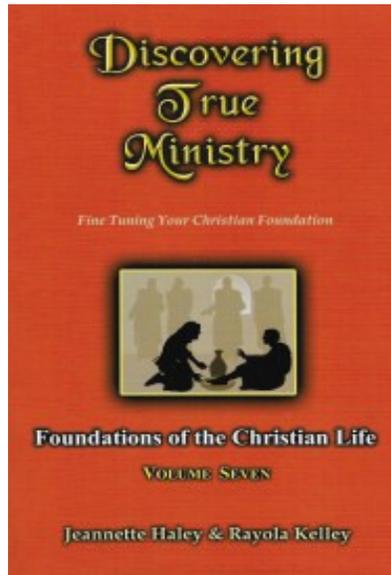


Visit the Gentle Shepherd Ministries Web Site to view the chapel paintings (and more art), to listen to Rayola's weekly messages, re-view her books, and to view articles and newsletters.

www.gentleshepherd.com

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" - 1 John 3:16

Discovering True Ministry by Rayola Kelley and Jeannette Haley



Discovering True Ministry is the final volume in the seven series of informational books prepared in compliance with the Gentle Shepherd Ministries Discipleship Course. This volume contains the combined talents of the two founders of the ministry, Jeannette Haley and Rayola Kelley.

The diversity of challenges that confront Jesus' followers and that tests their character and buffets any spiritual advancement are clearly brought out in this volume. The ministries of these two women represent 53 years of Christian service. As you will gather from this volume, their experiences concerning ministry and adversities are many, but the spiritual treasures they have gleaned from such challenges far outweigh the difficulties.

Jeannette's first novel in this volume, *Interview in Hell*, will challenge people's perspective about the real issues surrounding ministry.

Jeannette's sequel to *Interview in Hell*, *Interview on Earth*, finds the heavenly messenger, Maschil, who was introduced in the first book, given a special assignment on earth.

To Machil's dismay, the assignment he has been entrusted with is not just a matter of ensuring the Gospel's impact on those who are heirs to salvation, but he must also confront the great heretical darkness that is invading the professing Church.

In the third and final book by Jeannette in this volume, you will see the personal fiery preparation a servant of God may have to endure to come to a place where God is able to use him or her for His glory. *Rose of Light, Thorn of Darkness* highlights some of Jeannette's personal experiences in the fiery ovens of preparation, spiritual enlargement, and growth. Jeannette manages to paint a mosaic of her real-life challenges and afflictions that included intrigue, personal battles, and spiritual challenges through the life of the main character, Julie Danza.

Rayola's first book in this volume, *From Prisons and Dots to Christianity*, presents a powerful insight into the process that must take place to bring a believer to perfection in Christ. By revealing the inner struggles that often take place in this process, it allows the reader to see into the author's heart, life, and mind.

In the final book, *So You Want to be in Ministry*, Rayola gives insight into the real shaping and molding of God-ordained ministries. Often formed in travail and tested in the challenging harvest field of humanity, they show that true ministries of God do not just happen. Servant ministers must be prepared and personally shaped by the hands of the great Potter to be used for His glory and purpose.

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