

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."

(Jeremiah 6:16)

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COLLEGE PRESIDENTS, THEN AND NOW

Jerry C. Brewer

Under the heading of, "College Presidents State Their Views On Speculative Teaching," in the Oct. 11, 1934 issue of *The Gospel Advocate*, **E. H. Ijams**, president of David Lipscomb College wrote, "In view of existing conditions and the spread of hurtful doctrines in certain quarters, I ask that David Lipscomb College officially reaffirm its loyalty to every Bible principle of moral Character and Christian doctrine. As a safeguard for the future, I suggest that it be the policy of the board to close the doors of the institution against anyone who would teach or encourage the spread of unscriptural doctrines or hurtful speculations originating in the opinions of men rather than in the revelation of God's word."

In the same article, **James F. Cox**, president of **Abilene Christian College** wrote, "No atheist, sectarian, hobby rider, nor any one who is not a loyal, constructive supporter of pure New Testament Christianity, will ever be on its faculty so long as I am president. ...We believe, too, that Christian colleges should let the brethren know how their faculties are relative to denominationalism."

As the saying goes, "That was then, this is now." Seven decades have come and gone since those men expressed their devotion to New Testament Christianity on behalf of their schools. Where are their schools now? It's patently obvious that **Royce Money** who now heads **Abilene Christian** would never subscribe to brother Cox's statement. In

fact, Money bent over backwards to fellowship the Christian Church denomination as he co-delivered the opening address at ACU's annual lectureship with Don Jeanes, president of the Christian Church's Milligan College.

L. Randolph Lowry III, Lipscomb University's president would certainly not subscribe to brother Ijams' "closed door" to anyone who would teach...the spread of unscriptural doctrines. If he did, **John Mark Hicks** who is "Minister of Adult Education" at **Rubel Shelly's** denomination, Woodmont Hills in Nashville would not be on DLU's faculty. Hicks was one of the speakers at the Tulsa Workshop in March of this year with Max Lucado, Oak Hills Church, San Antonio, Texas, Mark Henderson of Oklahoma City's "Quail Springs Family of God," and Victor Knowles, editor of the Christian Church magazine, "One Body."

Neither would **Mike O'Neal, Oklahoma Christian University's** president, subscribe to the statements of brethren Ijams and Cox. Both **Rick Atchley** who preaches at **Richland Hills** in Texas, and **Mark Henderson of Quail Springs** in Oklahoma City have been chapel speakers at Oklahoma Christian during this school year. Atchley spoke last fall and Henderson spoke Feb. 5, 2007. Richland Hills announced in December, 2006 that it would begin a Saturday night worship with mechanical music and Quail Springs is now also consider-

ing worshipping with mechanical instruments. When O'Neal was asked about using these men on campus, he replied "The University has not yet addressed any official response to the matters you describe, but it is our plans to study the issues and formulate an appropriate response in the months ahead. I believe both of these men were invited to speak before the announcements were made. I do not personally support the changes they have announced, but this is a matter that our administration and our trustees will need to address together after prayerful consideration of all viewpoints" (Email from Mike O'Neal, April 20, 2007). His statement that, "both of these men were invited to speak before the announcements were made," doesn't hold water. Mark Henderson spoke a full week after his Jan. 28, 2007 sermon at Quail Springs concerning that church's plans to implement an instrumental service. But even if they were asked to speak long before that, Oklahoma Christian could have canceled the invitations. That they continue to use such false teachers speaks volumes about where Oklahoma Christian's administration stands relative to error. They obviously don't have a problem with it.

How does O'Neal's attitude compare with those of Ijams and Cox? Ijams would, "close the doors of the institution against anyone who

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College Presidents...



Guest Editorial

ROCHESTER COLLEGE PROMOTES WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH AND THE HOME

Chris Dawson

On April 7, 2007 Rochester College (formerly Michigan Christian College) held its 2nd annual Diversity Dialogue and Luncheon in the Richardson Theater on the College's campus. The theme of the seminar was "Bridging the Gender Divide." The dialogue began at 9a.m. and ended at Noon with lunch following. The Keynote speakers were Candace Cain (Vice President of Student Services/Dean of Students) and Glenda Thomas (member of the Rochester Hills Church of Christ, her husband Evangelist J. C. Thomas, Jr. is the Director of Diversity, at Rochester College). The last portion of the Dialogue was a panel discussion which included **Rubel Shelly** (Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Rochester College), **Jimmy Hurd** (minister of Oakland Church of Christ in Southfield, MI, moderator of discussion), **Carol Van Hooser** (Assistant Professor of Biology at Rochester College), a minister from the Apostolic Church, and the two female Keynote speakers.

This was my first time visiting the campus, which is about 65 miles from my home. I attended the meeting with a fellow gospel preacher in this area. We arrived too late to hear the Keynote speakers give their presentations, but we were right on time for their panel discussion. The two issues of focus that morning were the woman's role in the home and the woman's role in the church. Some of the women on the panel related bits of their experiences in breaking down gender barriers in their own congregations, and were encouraging others to be bold in doing the same. Reading Scripture in the public assembly, leading at the Lord's Table, leading prayer in mixed groups, and even women teaching and preaching to the church was being promoted during this discussion. There was much feeling and emotion in the

statements that were made, and very little Bible acknowledged.

It was eye opening to hear some of the things that were being said that morning. But first of all, what we saw there wasn't all bad. For one thing there were very few in attendance that day. I counted approximately 25 individuals, including the speakers. Also, some on the panel discussion said there was fear in the hearts of the elders, preachers and members concerning the promotion of women leadership. Some of the women on the panel told how they received rebuke by some of the sisters in their congregations for engaging in leadership activities in the assembly. There are folks out there on the fence, that are not wholly given over to this idea yet. There are preachers who want to push their liberating agendas but are a little leery because of opposition. Brethren who have spoken out and continue to speak out against liberalism can take courage in the fact that their voice is doing something in the church. But then there was much to weep over as well.

If the leaders in this Diversity Dialogue represent the "scholars" in the brotherhood, we are in a heap of trouble. First of all, if those panel members who are supposed to be members of the Lord's church don't know any better than to invite a preacher from the Apostolic Church to work with them, then we can see already that they have serious problems. The Apostolic Church is known for their belief in speaking in tongues and miraculous works for today, among other things.

Second, Carol Van Hooser, the biology professor from Rochester, admitted that she taught evolution in her classes, stating that students need to understand the theory. She also said that it didn't really matter if a student in her class believed that God created the universe in six liter-

al days, or if He took eons of time to create it. She asked the question, what would be the big deal? This is just a small sampling of the type of faith destroying work that is going on at Rochester College, and we haven't even gotten to their position on the role of women.

Dr. Shelly (as he was addressed) actually made some Bible observations about the matter. First of all, during the panel discussion Shelly said that the church's understanding of leadership in the home was all wrong. He said that the church has been observing Bible texts through "dirty lenses." He made reference to Genesis 3:16 where God says to Eve, "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." His commentary on this passage was that this is a "descriptive" statement rather than "prescriptive." His idea was that after the sin was committed in the garden, women would be subjected by their husbands to the will of the husband throughout the history of degenerated societies. But he also stated that Christ would come and restore the woman to her honorable role when the New Testament era was ushered in.

After the session was ended, I took the opportunity to ask brother Shelly some questions about his comments. I asked, if Genesis 3:16 is descriptive rather than prescriptive, and if Christ restored the women's original role in His kingdom, why does the New Testament also teach the headship of the husband in the home (Eph. 5:22-25; I Peter 3:1-6; I Cor. 11:3)? What he said indicated that he believed the husband didn't have any authority over his home at all. He pointed out to me that the context of Ephesians 5 shows a comparison of Christ and his church to the husband and his wife. He said the passage indicates that the authority the husband has, is to give his life in place of his wife's. He said the husband is not given the right to be a "boss." I mentioned to Rubel that Christ was the one who gave commandments to the church and he said, "Yes, but not very many." How ridiculous! Does the church have the right to tell Christ what He will do and what He will not do? Regardless of how few or how many commandments Christ gave the church, He is the one who has the authority over

the church, and the husband in like manner has authority over the wife (Eph. 5:23).

We also discussed the leadership of women in the church. Shelly told me that he had no problem with women leading prayer, preaching or teaching. I Corinthians 14:34-35 are verses that don't mean a thing to these brethren. Neither does I Timothy 2:11-15. Rubel said that women teach in mixed Bible classes from the pews by the comments and questions they raise, therefore we shouldn't have a problem with a woman standing up before the class to teach. I suppose that if an infidel came into Rubel's class and made a good point about working for a living, or loving your neighbor, that the infidel would be asked to lead the class. Why can't we recognize a difference between making a comment from the pew and standing in front of the class to teach? Is this where our "great scholars" are in the church?

Phebe was brought into the mix in order to prove that women could be deaconesses. Romans 16:1 says, *"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea."* The word "servant" is the Greek word *diakonos*, which according to Thayer means, "one who executes the commands of another." This could refer to one in an official church office, the office of a deacon (I Tim. 3:13); but, this is not the exclusive meaning or even the general meaning of the word. Jesus was also called a *diakonos* (Rom. 15:8). But who would argue that Jesus was serving in the office of a deacon in the church? I Timothy 3:12 says the deacons are to be husbands of one wife, period. It is funny how liberals can use some passages in order to prove a point, but mock faithful brethren for "proof texting."

Shelly did mention that he doesn't agree with the idea of women elders. It seemed sort of odd that he would allow women to perform all of the other acts and positions of leadership but not an appointment to the eldership. I figured that he would say this because I Timothy 3:2 says that a bishop must be the husband of one wife, eliminating the option of women. However, he said this was not the reason, and that I had a naive interpretation of the passage. Although the passage says that a

bishop "MUST" be these things, I Timothy 3:1-7 is not a list of requirements according to Rubel. He cited the fact that brethren will appoint a man to the eldership when he has only one child, not "children" as the text says. How misguided! If someone were to ask me if I have children I would say yes, though I only have one daughter. Sara said that she had "children" after giving birth only to one child, Isaac (Gen. 21:7). I never did understand his reason for disallowing women into elderships.

There was in this meeting an overall tone of arrogance and irreverence toward the authority of the word of God. There is a phony intellectual atmosphere among these folks. People in this assembly laughed at the idea that someone might be offended at a woman leading prayer in public service. These are the "Christ-like" leaders at Rochester College, and this is just a sample of what is going on in our brotherhood schools. Should we not be moved by the thought that future leaders in the church are coming out of institutions like this! It reminds us of Isaiah 3:12, *"As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths."*

Faithful brethren need not grow weary at this time. These false brethren are not going to give up easy. In fact, it seems that these preachers and professors are not coming back to the truth, but the next generation may still be reached. We need to continue to be fervent in our work and prayers to God that the liberal movement can be diverted as much as possible. The Diversity Dialogue meeting at Rochester College was closed with a prayer led by a woman, and the Director of Diversity told all of us that the same Dialogue would be conducted next year, saying, "We will continue to champion this.

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College Presidents...

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would teach or encourage the spread of unscriptural doctrines or hurtful speculations originating in the opinions of men rather than in the reve-

lation of God's word," and Cox would have no one "who is not a loyal, constructive supporter of pure New Testament Christianity." But O'Neal says, "it is our plans to study the issues and formulate an appropriate response in the months ahead," and prayerfully consider "all viewpoints." Rather than considering "all viewpoints," Ijams and Cox didn't need to wait to see which way the wind was blowing. They had obviously read the New Testament in formulating their "response" to error. That's a good idea for O'Neal and his staff. It might help them to recognize that Quail Springs and Richland Hills are practicing things "originating in the opinions of men rather than in the revelation of God's word."

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"I BELIEVE THE LORD, BUT..."

Marvin L. Weir

"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4).

Many people who profess to be Christians would angrily protest if they were told they did not believe the Lord. A failure to believe Christ is not a new problem. During His earthly ministry, Jesus said to the Jews, "And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he sent, him ye believe not" (John 5:38). Jesus repeated His indictment again, saying, "For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words" (John 5:46-47). Words have meaning! Jesus forthrightly declares, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). The majority of people who profess belief in the Lord (that He exists) do not believe Christ! We will offer proof to back up this assertion.

First, members of religious denominations claim to believe in Christ, but they do not believe what He said about **building His church**. Jesus clearly states, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). One cannot believe this statement of the Lord and believe that He intended to build many different churches! Man has absolutely no right or authority to establish or build a church. Paul affirms what Jesus taught in saying, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling" (Eph. 4:4). Paul again teaches, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:13). The Lord's church is blood-bought (Acts 20:28) and did not originate in the mind of man. Christ is "head over all things to the church, which is his body" (Eph. 1:22-23). The Lord has promised to one day save His body [church] (Eph. 5:23),

not multiple man-made religious bodies teaching contrary to His divine will! Those who align themselves with "churches" established by men may believe in Christ, but they do not believe what He taught.

Second, many people believe in Christ but do not believe what He said about **being called by the Gospel**. It is not unusual to hear one talk about his "experience" that occurred before he was "saved." Just about every one of these "experiences" told to me differs from every

other person's supposed "experience." The truth is that the Bible mentions nothing about any "experience" preceding one's salvation. Every person called by the Lord is called in exactly the same way — by the precious Gospel (II Thess. 2:14). The Lord's plan for one to become a member of His church requires *belief* (Heb. 11:6), *repentance* (Luke 13:3), *confession* (Rom. 10:9-10), and *baptism* for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). The Gospel is the only "power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16), whether Jew



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT?

One of the first internal problems of the church that we read of was the neglect of the Grecian widows in the daily ministration (offering) (Acts 6:1). The solution as stated by the apostles was for the congregation to find seven men whom they, the apostles, could appoint over this business. Many treat this as though these men were "deacons." The qualifications, however, were not the ones cited in I Timothy 3. I do agree that this work could have been laying the groundwork for the work of deacons later on. One of the qualities they were looking for was men who were full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:5).

Prior to Acts 6, the Scriptures show that the apostles were the ones with power (Acts 4:33). Hence, the selection of the seven did not refer to miraculous power. To be filled with the Spirit then carries another meaning. Paul told the brethren at Ephesus to be "...filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). The verse just before called on them to be wise by understanding the will of the Lord (v.17). Being filled with the Spirit is another way of saying that we are being led by the Spirit. How then does the Spirit lead us today?

Paul makes a contrast with the law of Moses and the law of Christ. The law of Moses is living after the flesh while following Christ is living after the Spirit (Rom. 8:13). If we live after the Spirit then we mortify the deeds of the flesh. We do this by accepting the teachings of Jesus as revealed by the Spirit. One, then, who does this is led by the Spirit of God through those teachings (Rom. 8:14). Being filled with the Spirit is the issue of filling up one's heart with the Word of God. It is not miraculous or mysterious. It is a person accepting the will of Christ and doing that will each day (James 1:22).

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or Greek! One may believe in Christ, but he does not believe Christ if he refuses to obey the Gospel.

Third, even many church members believe in Christ but do not believe what He said regarding **the kingdom of God being first in their lives**. The world we live in is a busy place, and there is always something to do. However, the Lord has instructed believers to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness (Matt. 6:33). Brethren must learn that spiritual matters take priority over worldly matters. One fails to seek first the kingdom when he allows things such as sports, company, school activities, recreation, or vacation to take priority over assembling with the saints to worship God. Brethren may believe in Christ, but they do not believe what He said in Matthew 6:33, when they allow worldly activities (no matter how good and innocent) to cause them to forsake assembling with the saints (Heb. 10:25).

Fourth, some brethren believe in Christ but do not believe what He said about **those outside of His body being lost!** It has already been established that there is a Gospel plan of salvation. Jesus said, *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:16). The Lord did not say, *“He that believeth and is not baptized shall be saved,”* but this is exactly what those of denominational persuasion teach. Sadly, many brethren today are convinced there will be saved people who are not members of the Lord’s church! The word of the Lord declares that salvation is in Christ (II Tim. 2:10) and that one is “baptized into Christ” (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 3:27). Paul understood and taught that vengeance will be rendered *“...on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power”* (II Thess. 1:8-9).

One may claim to know the Lord while refusing to obey His will, but John writes, *“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him”* (I John 2:4).

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ABUSING THE LORD’S SUPPER

Bill Jackson (Deceased)

In looking into I Corinthians 11, we have these words from the apostle to help us to see Corinth’s condition as regards to worship:

- 1) Coming together for the worse (v.17),
- 2) Coming together in a divided state (v.18),
- 3) Coming together with an allegiance to men (v.19),
- 4) Coming together with no thought as to the significance of the supper (v.20),
- 5) Coming together in mixing their common-meal items in with worship (vs.21,22), and
- 6) Coming together with no discernment of the body of the Lord, and thus their participation was in an unworthy manner (vs.27-29).

The apostle indicates a great spiritual sickness in their midst, with some of them actually “in death” (v.30). The wonderful privilege of worship was being abused, perverted and mishandled. We must continually examine ourselves (II Cor. 13:5), in this and in every way, that we insure that our worship will be in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

But we want to speak of the abuse of the Lord’s supper in our own time, and in some particular ways wherein we should now stop and examine ourselves with a determination to improve. We make mention of these points regarding the abuse just noted:

1) We abuse the Lord’s Supper when there is no anticipation of worship. The Christian is a worshipper, and worship is to be a great and continual part of his life. Yes, “exhort one another” (Heb. 10:25). The Supper is mentioned as a rallying cause of the saints on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). If the Supper is meaningless to us as we think of it, and as we approach the observance of it, it will be meaningless as we partake as well.

2) We abuse the Supper if we have the view that “this is all that matters.” There are five avenues of worship, and if five are necessary, then all five are important. There

has been too much of an attitude that says, “Just so I get the Lord’s Supper!” For all its importance, it is not ALL IMPORTANT! It is fruitless to be half-hearted in all other worship, and then to try to be of a spiritual mind when it is time to observe the Supper.

3) We abuse the Supper if we think that observance somehow makes up for the time misspent in sin, indifference and carelessness. Not one word is said in the New Testament about the Lord’s Supper affecting “cleansing” for the disobedient child of God! If he is unfaithful to God, he is in no better position to partake of the Lord’s Supper than he is to sing or pray. Without making proper correction in life, he only adds sin to sin in going through the motions of Lord’s Supper observance.

4) We abuse the Supper if we spend the week or weekend in fun and games, perhaps on vacation, and just barely squeeze in time to make a service, arriving late and nearly to the point of exhaustion, and we do manage to “get the Supper.” Body and mind in such shape for worship is needed to worship “in spirit” — with spirit and understanding (I Cor. 14:15). It is an abuse of all worship, and not just the Supper, when I can BARELY find an hour to give to God!

5) Finally, one of the most flagrant abuses is on the part of those who wilfully absent themselves on Sunday mornings, and then will rise to partake on Sunday evenings as if some matter beyond their control blocked them that morning. We know that sicknesses and emergencies arise, but we are thinking of the *willful absence*, and then the Sunday evening partaking, as if God would subsidize the negligence. This is an abuse of the purpose and intent of the Lord’s Supper — a memorial with significance for Spiritual people!

May we examine ourselves in this avenue of worship, and in all others, that we will truly worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24), and that our coming together be for The Better! (I Cor. 11:17)

TRUTH AND AUTHORITY

Tom Wacaster

Some month's back I was sitting in the office of my financial broker. I never have liked that descriptive terminology for a man who handles my investments. Why couldn't they call him a "financial richer" instead of a financial "broker?" But back to my train of thought. After some talk concerning my accounts and what we might do to "rescue" what loss I had sustained during the recent financial downturn, our discussion turned to matters spiritual. He gladly told me of some things the church of which he was a member was doing. I listened patiently, and then I asked: "By what authority do you do those things?"

He seemed puzzled that I would ask such a question. I did my best to point out that God expects us to have authority for all that we do in "word or deed" (Col. 3:17). I sought to illustrate the point by likening our approach to the Bible in much the same way a builder might approach a blueprint for a house. My friend listened with interest, but seemed unable to understand the importance of the point I was trying to make. I came away from that discussion with the realization that very few in the religious world think much about Biblical "authority." It isn't that they don't understand what authority is, or how important it is that men respect authority, for they exercise common sense in this area every day of their life. They just don't make the application when it comes to religion. Perhaps you have experienced the same kind of response when you attempt to visit with your friends about the Bible. What follows are two articles that I wrote some years ago. I share them with hopes that they might assist you, or others, in understanding the importance of authority, as well as the nature of truth.

BY WHAT AUTHORITY?

The Postal Clerk informed me that the cost for mailing my package would be \$2.50. "You must be joking! That's highway robbery." I went away in a rage. I located another

Post Office in Mt. Vernon, handed my package to the clerk and asked, "How much?" Again the answer was \$2.50. I thought to myself, "Surely someone can give me the answer I want to hear." I left Mt. Vernon and made haste to yet another Post Office, this one in Quitman, and once again asked the cost. "\$2.50" came the reply. All of their answers were the same. May I suggest that the reason they all told me the same price is because they all consulted the same Postal guide. I can think of no other reason, can you?

I visited a church once. I asked the man at the "window," what it would take to get to heaven. "Why my friend, all you have to do is believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord. Nothing else is necessary." I went my way, pondering the statement he had made, and it was not long until I came to another church. Again, I went in and asked, "What will it take to get to heaven?" The answer was somewhat different. "Well son, God's grace will save everyone, and really there is nothing you can do. You are totally at God's mercy." I left somewhat perplexed at the divergent answers, and by and by I came to yet another church. I inquired and was told, "He that believes, repents, confesses and is baptized, and then lives faithfully, will be saved." Reader, why is it that different answers were given to that same question? It seems clear to me that different guides were consulted. If not, how do you explain the difference?

TRUTH AND CONTROVERSY

It is a recognized fact among those who seek to follow God that truth is absolute and attainable. We do not deny this. While some would have us believe that truth is subjective and elusive, the words of Jesus that "ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" serve as our compass in these matters. In addition to truth being absolute, it is also dogmatic to the core. Two plus two equals four — there is no room

for error. Sincerity of heart or honesty of motive does not annul this fact. Truth is also narrow. A college teacher writes the problem on the board. Twelve divided by two equals six. There is absolutely no room for deviation. The answer is NOT seven, nor is it five. But society does not argue, nor do they accuse the mathematician of being unloving, unkind or bigoted.

Now we move to the "truth" that makes men free. It is not mathematical truth, nor is it scientific truth, but that which is revealed from God Almighty through holy men "moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:21). This truth is dogmatic to the core. It will not co-exist with error, nor can it. By its very nature it is narrow in its application. But unlike the mathematical truth that two plus two equals four, or twelve divided by two equals six, this "truth" of which we speak has eternal consequences. But how do men react when faced with this truth? Sincerity is placed above simplicity, and feelings take precedence over fact. Men become angry at the truth because it restricts their freedom to act and behave in their own chosen way. Rather than simply accept the truth and obey it, they argue with the facts presented, become agitated at the one speaking the truth, and close their ears and heart, as if their rejection of the same will annul their responsibility toward those things spoken. Since the truth and only the truth will set me free, it would seem that all men, everywhere, would have such a disposition as to receive the truth at all costs.

My we be like the Bereans who were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so (Acts 17:11).

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WHEN YOU MOVE, SEND US
YOUR CHANGE OF ADDRESS

LET'S STAY FOCUSED

Roger D. Campbell

We need to always keep in mind who we are, what our purpose in life is, and where we are headed.

Some things we do in life do not require special attention on our part. We can successfully complete some tasks while we have the radio blaring and are talking on the telephone at the same time. Other tasks, however, require us to be completely focused on what we are doing. One that drives a school bus had better keep his attention on the task at hand. The same goes for a doctor that is performing open-heart surgery or a restaurant worker that is pouring hot grease. In so many endeavors in life, for one to lose his focus can cause unpleasant results, even real disaster.

As Christians we, too, need to stay focused. We need to always keep in mind who we are, what our purpose in life is, and where we are headed. If we fail to keep our focus we will soon get off course and into great spiritual danger. On what should the children of God stay focused? Though there may be many correct responses to that question, we want to point out three obvious answers.

For one thing, **God's children must stay focused on Jesus.** After all, He is the One Whom we are following! Jesus said, *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me"* (John 10:27). If we are to "follow his steps" (I Peter 2:22), then we need to pay attention to where His steps lead us. Yes, it is "Follow the Leader," but it is not a game. On that occasion when Peter walked on the water toward Jesus, in the beginning, he walked with no problem. Every indication is that at first he was focused on Jesus and not the strong wind. However, when Peter "saw the wind boisterous" his attention stayed on the potential danger and he was afraid (Matt. 14:29,30). Surely a key lesson from Peter's stroll is for us to keep our eyes focused on the Lord and not the storms of life.

All of us are involved in so many activities in life. Some of them are

activities at school, at work, or at home. Some of them may be personal acts of kindness or actually part of the work of the church. First century saints that were running "the Christian race" were exhorted to look "unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:1,2).

May we ever be like the apostle Paul, who said of himself, *"For to me to live is Christ"* (Phil. 1:21). Let us all strive to do our best to not lose sight of the fact that Jesus needs to be the center of our focus. He died that we might live through Him. That ought to be on our minds each day.

Second, **followers of Jesus must stay focused on the word of God.** Today there is a push to get away from "too much Bible." We expect such from those outside of Christ. It is disheartening, though, to see such an attitude among brethren. Some 21st-century saints spend little private time studying God's word and at the same time they want Bible classes turned into a social hour, shorter sermons, and bulletins that are filled with cute stories and social activities instead of Bible-related materials.

Brethren, we have got to keep our attention on the word of the living God! It is God's word that "is able to save" our souls (James 1:21). Nothing else can do that. It is God's word that serves as a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (Psalm 119:105). Nothing else can do that. It is God's word that can build us up and give us an inheritance among the sanctified (Acts 20:32). Nothing else can do that. Let us be like babies and "desire the sincere milk of the word that ye (we) may grow thereby" (I Peter 2:2).

Keep this thought in mind: it is impossible to stay properly focused on Jesus without staying focused on His teaching. When some of Jesus' disciples left Him to walk no more with Him, Jesus turned to the apostles and asked, *"Will ye also go away?"*

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:67,68). To turn away from Jesus was to turn away from the source of the words of life! Remember, Jesus said, *"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)?* Staying with Christ means staying with His word. And, keeping focused on Jesus includes staying focused on His word.

Finally, **followers of Jesus must stay focused on heaven.** Going to heaven when our earthly life is over — that is what it is all about! Going to heaven must be the goal that pushes us, the reward that drives us, the destination on which our attention is focused. By faith Abraham *"looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"* (Heb. 11:10). He, along with Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob desired *"a better country, that is, an heavenly"* (Heb. 11:16). You and I must share that same longing.

Hear the truth of II Timothy 2:4: *"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."* As soldiers of the Christ, we must not allow ourselves to become entangled or bogged down with the affairs of this earthly life. We must keep our focus on heaven!

Jesus taught His disciples, *"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"* (Matt. 6:20,21). May our desires ever be set on things above, where Jesus sits at the right hand of God (Col. 3:1,2). Satan would love to get us so distracted that we would not focus on that which we need to.

May the Lord help us all to stay focused on Jesus, His word, and heaven as our final dwelling place.

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