

God and Man

Remember that God sees the whole picture. He sees all the past; He sees all the present; and He has the power to see all the future. He can see the end from the beginning, and He knows the destiny of every person and the solution to every problem. He loves us and is always available to us, but He will force neither Himself nor His will upon us. As long as we live, we are allowed to choose. He is concerned about our true welfare and happiness - here and hereafter. With Him on our side every thing will turn out well (Romans 8:28,31); but if He must be against us, nothing will turn out right.

- by **Bill Crews**

Wash Your Face

When you see a dirty face in the mirror, you wash your face, not the mirror. Likewise when we see error in our lives portrayed by truth revealed in the Bible, let us simply clean up our lives and quit criticizing the Bible. What do you think of a man who breaks a mirror because he doesn't like what he sees? Then what do you think of one who criticizes the truth that simply reveals the inner man that we can't see with the physical eye?

- by **Leslie Diestelkamp**

Faultfinders

When I think of faultfinding, I think of Judas Iscariot in Jn.12:1-8, who complained that Mary wasted the perfume she poured on Jesus' feet. A much better use of it, he reasoned, would have been to sell it, and give the proceeds to the poor. Or I think of the Jews in Jesus' day, who found fault with John the Baptizer because of his ascetic lifestyle, and yet were able to find fault with Jesus, even though they perceived Him to be exactly the opposite (Lk.7:31-35). Or I think of Naaman, who, not content to have found a prophet who could cure his leprosy, was outraged that he didn't do it his way (2 Kings 5:9-12).

Some people seem born with nitpicking complaints on their lips. There is no way to please them. But in truth, faultfinding is a learned trait that Christians must unlearn. "These are grumblers, finding fault," reads Jude 16. This supercritical behavior can be devastating when leveled against a fellow believer. It crushes initiative, hurts feelings, wounds relationships, and tempts sensitive disciples to think, 'I'll never try again.' It is a sin. The Golden Rule and the motivating principle of love (I Cor. 13) show it to be wrong. And Christians, of all people, should stop it.

Remember the motive behind Judas' faultfinding? "Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it" (Jn.12:6). Many faultfinders today are driven by envy, greed, or some other ignoble cause. Don't be a harsh, petty critic of your brethren. To do so is to make sure that God will find fault with you.

- by **Jim King**

In Vogue to Be Vague

We are told that in order to be effective, preaching must "relate the ambiguities of the New Testament to the complexities of modern society." We are pretty sure we know what that means, and it isn't "shelling the corn and showing the cob." But, in case you haven't noticed, it is now in vogue to be vague. We even know of two people who, after attending an entire series of gospel meetings, thought we were advocating interdenominational and not nondenominational Christianity. Although all the blame for this ought not to be put on the preacher, fifty years ago no one would have made such a mistake after attending one of our gospel meetings.

In truth, we are drifting and have no one to blame but ourselves. Wanting to have our ears tickled, we are accumulating to ourselves teachers in accordance with our own desires (II Timothy 4:3). In Matthew 11:7, the Lord, speaking about John the Baptist, asked the people of

His day, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see?" If asked that question today, many might answer, "We want to see a dandy dressed in three hundred dollar suits with matching shoes, along with gold chains, bracelets and diamond rings, using four hundred dollar words that impress but do not offend."

Josiah Holland, who lived in the century before this one, knew the remedy for our current situation. He said: "God give us men. A time like this demands strong minds, great hearts, true faith, and ready hands; men whom the lust of office cannot buy; men who will not lie; men who stand before a demagogue and damn his treacherous flatteries without winking; tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog; in public duty and private thinking."

Real men are hard to find, and always have been. It has been said that in order to emphasize the difficulty of finding a man of integrity in ancient Athens, the Greek philosopher Diogenes lighted a lamp in the daylight and went searching for one. Years before this alleged event, Jerusalem could have been saved if one man of integrity could have been found within the city (cf. Jeremiah 5:1). Even the apostle Paul recognized the difficulty in finding a real man when he said, "for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Philippians 2:21).

May God give us men who are willing to use "great plainness of speech" (II Corinthians 3:12). At the same time, we pray there is enough spirituality left among churches of Christ that we don't slay all such plain speakers.

- by *Allan Turner*

The Mormon 'Approach' Is Wrong

Have you ever studied with any of the Mormon 'missionaries' that come calling at your door? Most of these young men carry the title "elder", and they have devoted themselves to a two year period of spreading their message door-to-door. Their zeal and dedication are commendable, but their message is full of error (Romans 10:1-3).

Not only is the message that the Mormons teach wrong, so is their approach. As you probably know, the Mormons base their religion heavily upon the teachings of Joseph Smith. He was a man who lived in New York during the first half of the 19th century. He claimed to have received a special revelation from God. The details of how he supposedly received this revelation are all very strange. Smith proceeded to write several books. The most famous of these is the Book of Mormon. While the Mormons claim to believe the Bible, they argue that it has been corrupted over the centuries, and that the writings of Joseph Smith represent a more accurate "latter day" revelation from God.

It seems obvious that there is a huge burden of proof that accompanies these claims. If the Book of Mormon and its companion writings are from God, then those who believe in them ought to be able to provide compelling evidence of their authenticity. After all, this is what we do when we meet someone who does not believe the Bible. In fact, we put a good deal of emphasis on studying 'evidences' so that we can answer those who question us about our faith (2 Peter 3:15).

The Mormons typically refuse to engage in such a study. Their standard response is to ask us to pray to God, promising that He will give an answer by way of a "warm feeling" in the heart. This is the wrong approach. If the Mormons won't supply their 'evidence', we have no 'common ground' upon which to study with them.

- by *Greg Gwin*