

The Scriptures Are Our Guide

Two different views exist as to how one comes to a knowledge of God's will. The first view is that one comes to this knowledge by carefully reading and understanding the Scriptures; that Jesus promised His apostles that they would be led into all truth by the Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13); that they, along with other inspired men, wrote that truth in the Scriptures; that when we read what they wrote, we may "understand (their) knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:3,4); that the Scriptures, consequently, are an all-sufficient guide from earth to heaven.

The second view is that each child of God is led in some direct way by the Spirit in understanding God's will. People are often heard to say, "God is leading me into this understanding," or "God is leading me in this way," and in saying this they mean that He is leading them through some direct guidance. While they do not disregard the Scriptures altogether, they feel that they are led in some additional way into an understanding of God's will, applying John 14:26 and John 16:13 to every "believer."

This writer confesses to holding the first view and would ask those who hold to the second view the following questions:

(1) If, indeed, all believers are led directly into an understanding of God's will, why was it necessary for the first converts to continue "steadfastly in the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42)? Would they not have had the same understanding of God's will as the apostles had?

(2) How do we explain the differences in doctrine and practice that exist among those who claim to be led into their understanding directly by the Lord? Differences abound among those who claim direct guidance, while the Scriptures teach only "one faith" (Ephesians 4:4-6). Is the Lord really leading all these people into conflicting ideas? Is He the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33)?

(3) If you could accurately communicate to me - either orally or in writing - this understanding into which you have been led, could I place as much confidence in it as I do in the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, etc? Could I continue steadfastly in your teaching as the early Christians did in the apostles' teaching? If so, how would I know to continue steadfastly in your teaching rather than in the teaching of some person whose understanding conflicts with yours? With all these conflicts, would we not have to go back to the Bible to know what was right? And wouldn't that, in reality, take us to the first view stated in this article, which I already accept?

The truth is -- the Scriptures are God's divine truth (John 17:17). One can read and understand them (Eph. 3:3,4). They are all-sufficient as a guide from earth to heaven (2 Tim. 3:16,17). They will provide the basis for our judgment in the last day (John 12:48). Read them carefully and obey them in love.

- by Bill Hall

Immaturity

King Ahab had a palace in Jezreel. Next to it was a vineyard owned by Naboth. Ahab wanted that vineyard and offered to buy it, either with cash or in exchange for another vineyard. But Naboth did not want to sell. "*So Ahab came into his house sullen and vexed . . . and he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and ate no food*" (1 Kings 21:4).

Poor Ahab! He did not get what he wanted so he pouted like a spoiled child. We read this account and think how silly for a grown man, a king, to act this way. But before we are too quick to condemn Ahab's childishness, let us take a look at our own.

Have you ever known of brethren who got upset because someone else was called on to do something they wanted to do? Or who placed membership at another church (took their toys and went elsewhere) because some little something did not suit? Or who stayed home because the preacher or elders did not come to visit often enough, or perhaps because of some misunderstanding with another Christian?

Paul said when he became a man he put away childish things (1 Corinthians 13:11). Let us do the same.

- by Frank Himmel

Taking God's Name in Vain

Due to the fact that we live in a society that for the most part shows little if any respect for God, we are inundated by people constantly taking the name of the Lord in vain. Often we Christians inadvertently pick up these habits.

I am confident most (hopefully all) of us do not commit the sin of using God's name in conjunction with any type of cursing or swearing. But I have heard some Christians using words and phrases that are equally as vain and therefore sinful, and I am sure they did not even realize it.

Phrases such as "Oh my God" and "Dear Lord", as used in common speech and on many TV shows, definitely fall within the category of condemned speech. The words "gosh" and "golly" are vain because they are euphemisms (mild expressions) for the name "God." Likewise the word "gee" (as in "gee whiz") is vain because it is a euphemism for the name "Jesus" (per the Random House College Dictionary).

We who love and respect God should avoid these expressions and words because they detract from God's nature as the Eternal Creator and Master of the universe.

- by Steve Garrett

How Do They Do It?

Every congregation has them. You know who they are. They're the ones who simply never miss an assembly. But more than this, they're the ones who are always 'johnny-on-the-spot' when something needs done or someone needs help. These folks are the 'backbone' of the local church, and they are the ones primarily responsible for accomplishing the essential work of the congregation.

You've seen them even when you know they're feeling just awful; even when their jobs and various responsibilities have them completely 'covered up'; even when they could easily be overwhelmed by personal grief or pain; even when circumstances have them totally 'swamped' -- through all of these things they still manage to make time for the Lord. They push through their illness, they 'keep on keeping on' when many others would have given in and given up. And you wonder: How do they do it?

While the kind of individuals we're describing each have their own unique characteristics, it is clear that they all share this one thing in common: their love and devotion for the Lord supersedes everything else in their lives. He is more important to them than their jobs, their families, or their hobbies. For them, minor aches and pains pale in comparison to the joy of doing His will. He is quite simply THE most important thing in their lives. And, they show it by how they live and what they do. For them it's not mere 'lip service'. It's the real thing -- heartfelt, devoted service to their Lord and Master.

One sister in her nineties who impressed everyone in the congregation with her faithfulness explained in these plain terms: "If I can get up, get dressed, and get to the doctor -- and I've been doing a lot of that these days -- then I can also get up, get dressed, and get to church services." Now, THAT'S what we're talking about. THAT'S how it gets done!

We're thankful for all our brothers and sisters who set such wonderful examples for the rest of us. May their tribe increase!

- by Greg Gwin