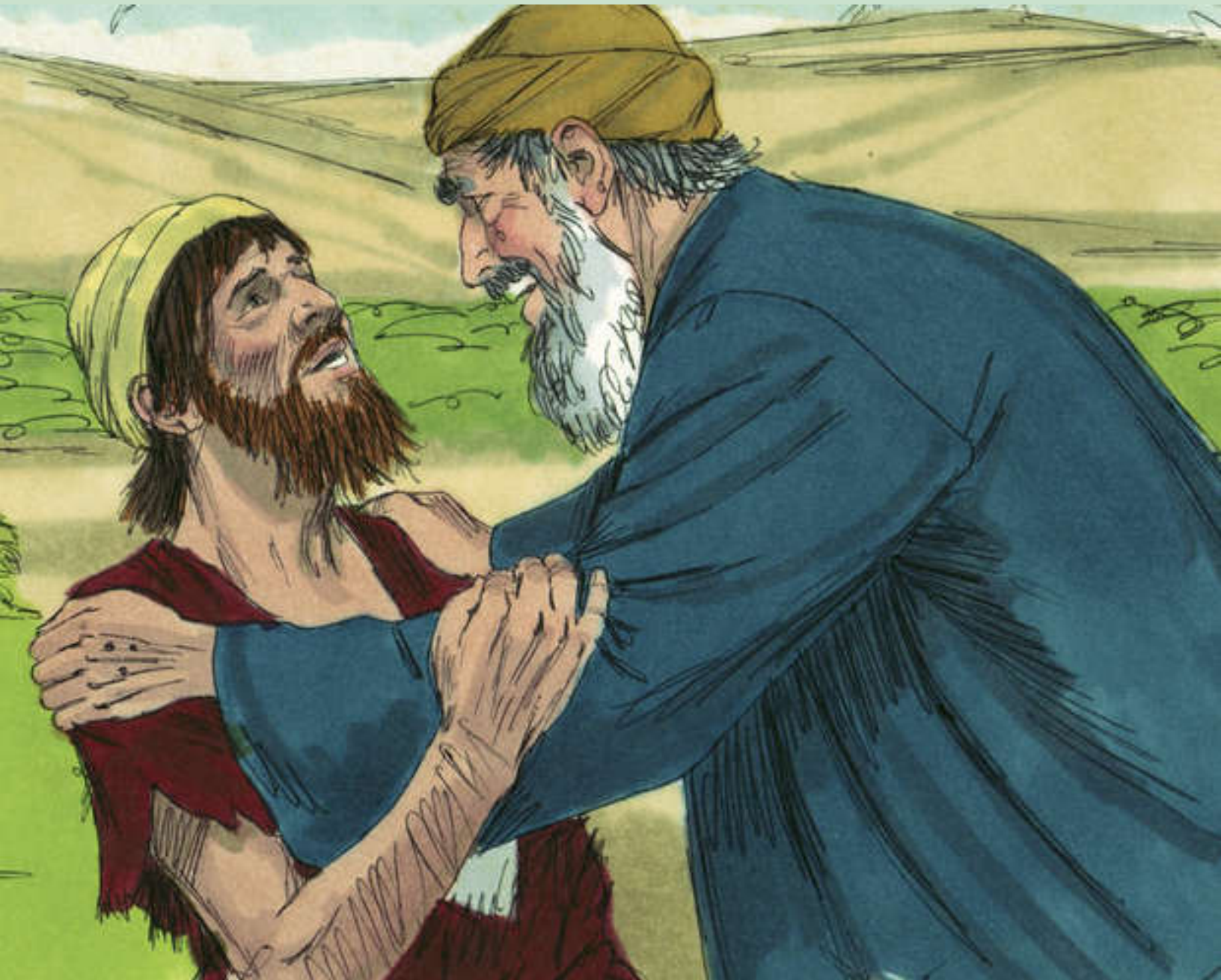




*May-June  
2018*

# *The Sabbath Sentinel*



**BSA—The Bible Sabbath Association**

*Jesus said, "your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost but now is found!"*

# The Sabbath Sentinel May-June 2018

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## FEATURES

- 3 Editorial "Who Do We Think We Are?"  
by Royce Mitchell
- 5 The President's Corner—"Understanding Romans 14:5-6"  
by Kelly McDonald, Jr.
- 7 "Seven Pillars of Wisdom" Part 5  
by Michael Suned
- 13 "The Unprodigal Son"  
by Lenny Cacchio
- 14 "Letting the Devil Redefine Words and Symbols"  
by Daniel Botkin
- 19 "Church at Home"  
by Darl Arbogast
- 22 "Blaine Neumann"  
Submitted by John Lemley

## DEPARTMENTS

- 23 Advertising

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# Who Do We Think We Are?

Within the various Churches of God there exists a multitude of beliefs and doctrines which separate us from each other. In many cases, these doctrines serve to divide us from one another. How can this be?

All of us recognize that Jesus wants us to walk as perfectly in the Way of God as we can. However, does the admonishment to walk in the Way carry with it the duty to judge whether, or not, our brethren walk perfectly and thereby to issue correction to them to “get them right with the Lord?” Does it give us the authority to proclaim that since they do not believe in identically the same way that they “must be worshipping a different God/Christ?” Yet, I have heard these claims made by some and directed at other brethren simply because of some minor difference in understanding.

Jesus, in John 7:24, tells us to judge righteous judgment. When we read that do we understand that to mean that we are to judge our brothers as to whether they accurately understand and keep every facet of the Commands of God? We ought to never take one scripture out of context to derive a policy or a dogma. Indeed, in Isa. 28:10 we learn that we are to understand the Word of God by taking wisdom from a multitude of scriptures on a topic.

With that in mind, we can move to other scriptures related to judging. In Luke 6:37 we find that Jesus tells His disciples to refrain from judging. Do we have a contradiction in the scriptures since Jesus told us in John 7:24 to judge righteously? Of course not. We all know that the scripture cannot be broken. What is the answer then? The answer is in understanding who or what we are to judge.

Jesus is unequivocal in His admonition that we are not to judge. Why? Because we will be judged with the same kind of judgment that we judge. Let’s consider that our brethren have differing beliefs that they can support in their own minds. If we judge

them as being less than brethren, we expose ourselves to being judged for being less than perfect in our own understanding. Do we wish to be judged about the things that we don’t understand perfectly? Then we ought to refrain from judging our brethren whose beliefs differ from ours.

Over the last year we have published articles containing somewhat radically differing views on various subjects. Those do not sum up the range of our differences. Some of us, for example, understand the Second Commandment very differently. Some us understand the command to keep the Sabbath Day holy very differently. There are not many different sects of Sabbatarian fellowship because we all believe the same thing!

What is our responsibility for our brethren having different beliefs from one another? As it relates to dealing with our differences, we find the following: 1Peter 3:15-16 “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.”

An answer presupposes a question. That is to say that we can and should discuss our differences. But, notice that the discussion is to be done with meekness and fear. We should not take the place of Satan and become an accuser. When we support our differing beliefs in discussion, it should be done with a good conscience—but respectfully! In other words, if a belief based upon scriptures differs from ours, and we can’t adequately support from scripture our different understanding, then we ought to be quick to recognize that there is something that we do not yet understand and go back to our study on that element. What we should never do is to create an enemy of our brother, either in thought or deed, simply because of a difference in understand-

ing.

Instead we should assume that our brethren are honest in their understanding just as we would like to be considered. Should we change our beliefs because our brethren have different beliefs? Of course not. But, we should always recognize that we could be wrong in our belief as to what the scriptures mean and be willing to go back with an unbiased mind to the study of the scriptures for the purpose of reaffirming our belief, or allowing God to redirect us to His truths.

Some take to heart Jesus' admonition to go into all of the world and preach the gospel, and because of that they feel as if it is their responsibility to make sure everyone has the exact, correct understanding. Unfortunately, they don't grasp that, while the Holy Spirit is promised to lead us into all understanding, that promise is nowhere stated to bring all understanding immediately, in a week, a month, or even a lifetime. Sadly, zeal for the Way sometimes leads to upsetting and alienating others, including our brethren.

We are told to judge ourselves if we don't want to be judged. If we are honest, we have to admit that we fall short of perfection in our walk with the Christ and the Father. This is one reason why, in Matthew 7: 1-5, we are told to extricate our own problems so that we can see clearly to judge the problems of others.

There are those of our brethren who are absolutely convinced of their righteousness in their understanding. That's fine as long as they are honest in their study as to their understanding. But, we all ought to take notice of the statement of Paul who tells us to "take heed lest we fall." The minute we begin to feel that pull of Satan to be negative with a brother who has honest disagreements with our understanding we ought to recognize that we could be wrong and instead open our minds to whatever understanding God might be presenting to us through our brethren. We ought to be honest enough about ourselves to understand that we have not always understood the Word of God as we do at this time and then ask ourselves "If we were wrong then, al-

beit honestly, could we not be just as honestly wrong now?"

We ought to be like the noble Bereans. Paul writes that they searched the scriptures daily to see whether what they were told was the truth. It is a noble thing to be able to look at a brother's different understanding and then go back to the scriptures to be certain of our understanding. It is an excellent thing to have that humility that recognizes our own inadequate understanding and is willing to accept a different understanding while at the same time having the strength of conviction that leads us back into the scripture to improve our understanding as God's Spirit leads us thereto.

The will of God is not about imposing our understanding on others. We ought to recognize that God is more than powerful enough to cause us all to understand His Word in exactly the same way. But, He does not. That idea should bring a question to mind, "Why does God allow us all to have differences in understanding?" The answer can only be that He wants to see if we are willing to put His love to work when we deal with our differences. It's easy to become outraged when our belief on a subject is questioned. It is Godly to be patient with those who have different understanding from ours. It should be our goal to be patient with them. We want others to be patient with us. We should use that Golden Rule to know that we need to be just as patient, or moreso, as we want others to be with us.

Patience and tolerance for non-sin beliefs have long been at the core of the teaching of the Bible Sabbath Association. Being patient with those of differing beliefs not only keeps us safe from judging others unrighteously, but it puts us on the side of the Father who is abundantly patient with us. I am not encouraging people to abandon what they know. I am encouraging everyone to put on the same patience for others that God has for us. If we do so, not only will we have common ground in the Churches, but we will not be giving a place at the table for Satan whose entire mission is to cause us to think and act in sinful ways toward each other. We will focus on how we agree instead of how we differ.



## The President's Corner

# Understanding Romans 14:5-6

Kelly McDonald, BSA President

Romans 14:5-6 is among the most misunderstood verses in the Bible. These verses have been misunderstood as negating the Sabbath and other commandments. We will examine the example of Paul, Romans 14, and some history. This will make the passage clear.

One of the ways we interpret history is through what we call primary sources. This can include people who were eye witnesses to events as well as archeological findings from the time period. The Apostle Peter was a contemporary of Paul. Here is what Peter said about Paul:

*“And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness” (2 Peter 3:15-17, ASV).*

We learn some important details from Peter's words. Paul wrote some things that are hard to understand, but they do not negate the other Scriptures. The other Scriptures are a reference to the Old Testament. They did not have a New Testament in their day. Paul was a very educated man, which is why some people struggled with his words.

With this background understanding from Paul's life, let's look at the two verses in question: *“One man esteems one day as more important. Another esteems every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks. He who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks” (Romans 14:5-6, KLV).*

First of all, in Romans 14:1 Paul informed us that this issue was considered disputable. This means it is not clearly defined by Scripture. *“Now accept one who is weak in faith, but not for disputes over opinions.”* Secondly, the Greek word Paul uses for day, *hemera*, refers to any common day. It refers to the other six days of the week.

Third, the Greek word for holy, *hagios*, is not even found in this chapter (Romans 14). Thus, he is addressing common days, not holy days like the Sabbath. If he were referring to the Sabbath, Paul would have used the specific Greek word for Sabbath, *sabbaton*. Fourth, Paul was not addressing which days God considers to be holy, but what days men esteem higher than others. God is the one who set aside the Sabbath, not man.

Lastly, one must also consider his audience. Paul wrote this to the Romans. He is applying these verses specifically to days that the Romans considered to be important. Let's take a look at some primary sources from the time before, during, and after Paul that will illuminate the meaning of these verses.

The Romans were very superstitious. They considered some days of the week to be unlucky, such as Saturday (Tibullus, 1:3,17-18; Propertius 4:1,81-86). They also considered certain days of the month bad for specific activities such as business or travel (Marcus Varro, On the Latin Language: VI:29-31; Plutarch, Roman Questions, 25). There were even days of certain months on which activities were discouraged, such as marriage (Ovid, Fasti, 5:470-492). On some days, common activities were encouraged, such as eating certain foods (Ovid, Fasti, 6:169 – For instance, beans and spelt were eaten on June 1st to honor Juno).

The Romans conducted their behavior in this manner for one or more reasons. Sometimes these prohibitions were to honor a specific god or goddess (such as their activity on June 1st). Sometimes a certain date coincid-

ed with a fortunate or bad event that happened in Roman history (for instance, June 23rd was considered 'lucky' because a Carthaginian general, who was an enemy of Rome, killed himself on that day – Ovid, *Fasti*, 6:769). At other times, the Romans were just superstitious. For instance, the Romans considered odd numbers as unlucky. Certain odd days of a month were considered bad for business (Plutarch, *Roman Questions*, 25). For the superstitions of Augustus, who even thought his shoes were an omen, see Seutonius, *Life of Augustus*, XCII.

Another issue raised in Romans 14:5-6 is the issue of abstaining from meat. There was a strain of thought in the Roman world which believed very strongly in vegetarianism (Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, bk15:76-112, 140-142, 458-462; Seneca, *Epistulae*, 108:17-22; Plutarch: *On the Eating of Flesh*, 1:41 and *On Isis and Osiris*, sections 2,4,7; Lucius Apuleis, *Metamorphosis*, 11:26-29). From these sources we can see that their vegetarian beliefs were rooted either in the worship of other gods (such as Isis and Osiris) or in a form of reincarnation which viewed the spirits of dead people as dwelling in animals.

With this historical understanding, we can better as-

certain the meaning of these verses. Paul himself was an educated man and even a Roman citizen. While he grew up Jewish, he also grew up in a culture that practiced these Roman superstitions. He was well versed with them.

What do we learn from Romans 14:5-6? If we are going to consider a common day as important to perform a specific activity, then we should do so unto the Lord and not to a pagan deity, or superstition. He is addressing this specific Roman cultural activity for common days and activities, not the Sabbath or any day declared holy by God.

Paul's example in the Bible shows us that he did not condemn any observance of the law, but that he continued to keep and reverence the Sabbath and Feast Days even after his conversion to Christianity (for a few examples: Acts 13, Acts 17, 18, Acts 20:16, Acts 27:9, and I Cor.16:8). All of the early churches kept the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week.

God is the one who declared the Sabbath Holy, not man (Genesis 2:1-3, Exodus 31:12-18, and Leviticus 23:1-6 to name a few). The seventh-day Sabbath persists even into the New Heavens and the New Earth (Isaiah 66:22-24).

## BSA's President' Speaking Schedule

**The Bible Sabbath Association's President, Kelly McDonald, will be appearing at several locations in May and June.**

### May Schedule

May 4-6 - Common Faith Network Retreat - Gatlinburg, TN

May 11 - Live Appearance on the internet show Start Our Sabbath

May 12 - Church of God International - Tyler, TX

May 19-20 - Hungry Hearts Church Murfreesboro TN

May 26 - Hungry Hearts Church - Cleveland, TN

### Tentative June Schedule

June 2 - Hungry Hearts Church - Athens, GA

June 9 - Hungry Hearts Church - Jackson, TN and Corinth, MS

June 16 - Hungry Hearts Church - Murfreesboro, TN

June 23 - Hungry Hearts Church Cleveland, TN

**Michael Suned**

### **Fourth Pillar of Wisdom: “Understanding”**

The sun rises and sets, as do the moon and stars—at least from earth’s perspective. The birds sing, eat and fly. Grass, fruits, and vegetables all grow and wither in perfect time and in their order, without delays, once proper conditions are met. It seems they have complete understanding of their schedule and their mission. We phrase these routines in present tense, ignoring these wonders that we don’t comprehend fully. We believe that they don’t worry about tomorrow, only today, or at least assume so! What we need to realize is that all of the creations of God contain the ability to understand when to do what it is that they were designed to do. Interestingly enough the situation is not much different when it comes to people. The difference is the level of understanding we have which allows us to either accept or decline a concept.

There are those who believe that animals don’t worry about tomorrow. However, they might be shocked by something that happened in China recently. A restaurant owner’s recent story left much for people to think about. One day he bought a sheep that was still feeding a little lamb for his restaurant. He routinely prepared the meat to serve the next day. After he had sharpened his knife, he left it by the sharpener for a restroom break before starting the task of butchering the animal. When he returned to pick up the knife it was gone. He was confused over being unable to find the knife since he had just left it by the sharpener moments earlier. He looked all around for the knife and eventually figured out that the little lamb had dragged the knife a short distance away from the sharpener and was laying on it crying. The owner saw what had happened and at that moment had an emotional breakdown. Eventually he closed his restaurant and became a vegetarian. I felt his pain; it was so evident

to me what had happened. I remembered a similar experience from the days of my youth when I was watching a sheep that was to be killed for our meal.

I don’t know what happened to the restaurant owner after that but I believe the accuracy of the story from having experienced a similar situation as a young man. Being a Mongolian, a land located in a remote area of the world, we dealt with all kinds of animals a lot more than we did people. I know of many touching stories about interactions between animal and animal, animal and people. Is an animal concerned about what they eat? I believe so. Their concern drives them so strongly that they move from place to place seeking better grass to eat. Moreover, we know that an animal can communicate and can have feelings of sorrow and happiness. Seeing this kind of moving incident triggers our minds to try to come up with an explanation that makes sense. The idea that animals can think, even reason to a limited extent, as well as display emotions is also challenging for those people who are recognized as “Experts” or “Authorities.” This controversial challenge consumes much time and energy.

More than a few times the limited understanding of men has been challenged, from the first day man existed in the Garden of Eden right up until this very minute. A particularly challenging example would be the apple. I am not talking about the “apple” that Eve touched, or the apple that Steve Jobs created. I’m talking about the apple that hit Isaac Newton on the head. His challenging question, “Why did this happen?” led experts to an understanding of the law of physics we know as “gravity.” We know that scholars were challenged and couldn’t immediately come up with an answer that satisfied Isaac Newton. In the process they denounced him and poor Newton was treated as if he had a demon. Yet such is the story of almost all in-

vention.

It is challenging for us to think beyond our current understanding and to break through the idea that “understanding” is only that which is recognized and proven by the scholars. Is it fair to say, “not any man knows everything?” Every inventor struggles at the beginning because, until an idea is completed, designed and all flaws are eliminated, it is still just an unproven idea which requires more understanding in order to come to fruition. A few good examples exist of ideas that had to be thought out in order to finally become perfected: gun powder, the steam engine, airplanes, nuclear power, brain surgery, nutritional supplements, and many more which were invented or improved through someone realizing that there was a better way than another thought possible. Their success is directly connected to their intellectual power which can be redefined as Understanding.

After the completion of those aforementioned invention processes, we must come to the realization that none of them were created through the applica-

tion of simple common sense. When we comprehend something our brain experiences a flashing thought, or perhaps a premonition. Much of the time this information is then passed on to others who have expressed an interest. The expression “Oh! That’s why!” often indicates that the concept wasn’t at all hard to understand. What those inventors and pioneers had reached in order to create those things was a level of understanding that wasn’t on the same level as most other people.

We live in a country where laws are enacted to protect children. It is too surreal to imagine living in a country where children are stolen and deliberately disabled by violently cutting off body parts and then displaying those children in high traffic areas as panhandlers. This is done in order to take advantage of people’s emotions to elicit monetary contributions from the public. It is impossible for us to imagine how much pain those children must have suffered when the appalling wounding was inflicted on them. Those children don’t receive pain killers to numb the nerves. No one shows the children any sympathy, no arms hold and soothe them saying “It will be ok.” They primarily live in dingy, cold, underground dark rooms or in abandoned and ruined shelters in the suburbs. It is also impossible for us to guess how short their lives are or how much they hope that they could be freed from the imposed slavery. We can hardly bear to focus on this topic for even a minute because it’s so sad and appalling. How can we stop this crime to prevent more children from being victimized by this type of crime? The answer has eluded discovery by others, like a soccer ball being kicked from one player to another, and these crimes continue. One effective solution was demonstrated and written about in cases where some of the children were smart enough to escape from those who had intended to inflict that tormenting, abusive fate.

In other words, criminals don’t succeed on every attempt to steal a child from their guardian. So how could it happen that these adult criminals would fail in their attempt to steal the child? Many little ones have successfully handled this dangerous moment even though they didn’t have knowledge. How





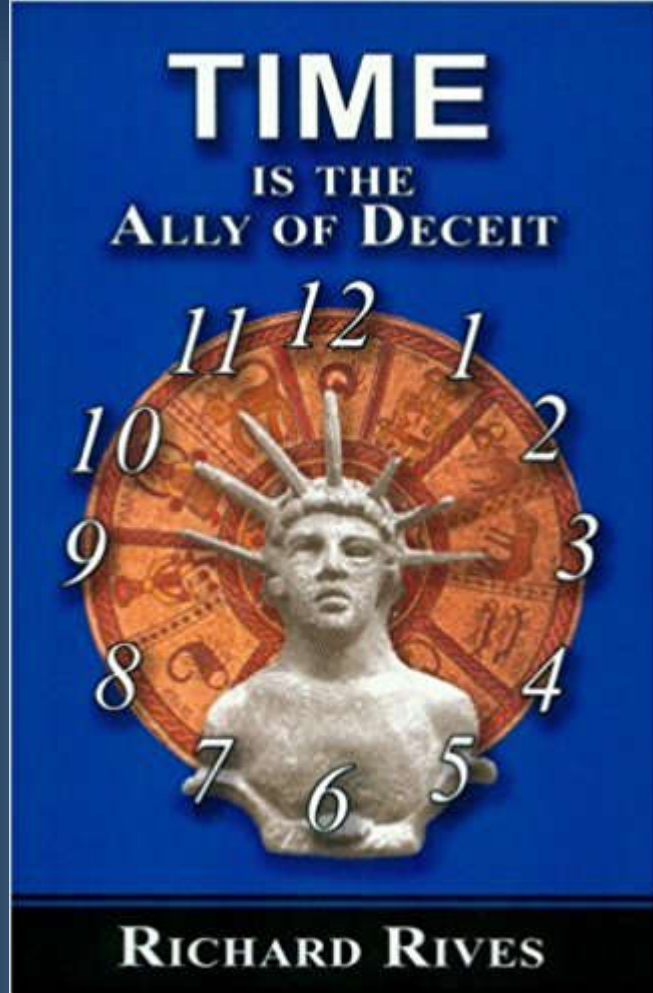
were they capable of doing that, turning the scenario completely in the other direction by simply doing something that the criminals had not anticipated?

There was a headline news story on television several years ago wherein a five year old kidnapped child in Atlanta, Georgia, was able to safely escape from the kidnapper simply by non-stop singing in the car. Based on his testimony, he had tried crying, screaming, and begging from the back seat of the sedan for the first few minutes in order to escape from the kidnapper. Nothing worked. This caused him to calm down and begin singing a gospel song repeatedly. The kidnapper started screaming at him to stop his singing but that didn't work. Eventually the kidnapper stopped his car and ordered the little boy to get out of his car. The child was not physically harmed.

Like the child above, more than a few children under the age of five have been able to escape from a criminal's clutches, afterwards sharing their personal testimonies with the public. The criminal had to go through some failures to get one victim for his scheme. It is, to me, an unquestionably and completely bizarre crime for anyone to commit. However, this type of crime does exist and happens all too frequently, causing one child after another to become a part of their schemes. Those who were involved in the kidnapper's criminal scheme knew that accepting the stolen child was not the right thing to do. However, the temptation for monetary gain was far greater than fear itself because they were able to convince themselves that accepting and enslaving the child was right—or at least profitable for them. Let us analyze more examples to find out how this works.

It has been shown to be true that children are capable of making a right decision without having proper knowledge or experience. That often shocks and confuses adults. In some fields of study, people consider that to be "sixth sense," spirit intervention or something else unexplained.

At this point I need to mention a strange mental characteristic that has afflicted people for thousands of years, the cultural habit of mental inertia. Some



## TIME is the Ally of Deceit

Richard Rives

Many aspects of Traditional Christianity cannot be found in the Bible. They can however be traced directly to the worship of pagan gods which predate Christianity by centuries. How is it that precepts that have nothing to do with Christ and everything to do with pagan sun worship have found their way into our churches? History reveals that there is one very good answer.

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people believe that they are spiritually right and that they alone are the true or chosen people who have authority from God and are granted greater advantages or insights than others. They believe that good things are their heritage, and part of their culture. They believe that they are special. Because of that they use double standards towards others in their lives. In those “special groups” correctness usually takes a back seat while their inner voices lead to fanaticism, that is to say, what is correct is determined by their beliefs rather than God’s word. The cultural habit of mental inertia is one of the roots of political, religious and economic “correctness.” This having been said, mental issues that we have should be admitted and accepted as counterproductive and causative of false visions. Having made such an admission, it should not then be a big problem to name that unknown resource that is used to recognize this pillar and make it easier to remember as well. This will also assist in making it more easily understandable for others who are trying to understand.

Understanding of this pillar can be associated with age. As a whole, younger people generally have far more energy and are more resourceful than their older counterparts. But, we also know that older people are generally wiser, although that is not always true. That is to say, it is true but not truth since there are exceptions.

Something else that is normal for the mainstream scientific community is their failure to understand holistic treatment. It is humorous that they agree that when they can’t do any good for a patient being consumed by cancer they then refuse to look to a higher power or a different understanding. In a losing battle with the disease they order chemotherapy, surgery and harmful medicines for patients instead of directing them towards holistic treatments, or people who practice holistic treatments. In fact the scientific community generally does not believe that holistic treatment has any value at all. Also, some religious people believe holistic treatment to be of the devil and evil—akin to the biblically condemned practice of witchcraft.

One thing nobody would deny as valuable to the

medical industry is the ability to understand and read a pulse rate. It is an easily learned skill like many others we learn. In order to learn to obtain an accurate reading, a practitioner completes an internship, which provides them with hands-on experience and an understanding of what is normal for a person, as well as what is abnormal. Learning in this method creates in them a certain amount of respect for what they have learned.

Moving on, let us see how “understanding” affects our lives and our happiness. Running a business successfully requires many talents and skills. The owner or manager must have a good understanding of the market needs for his company, the products or services that are provided and public relations related to handling both the customers and employees. The world wishes to put knowledge and formulas in college books thinking that whoever has finished the relevant college courses would have understanding of how to effectively run a business.

However, it is far better that the entrepreneur have “understanding” and the deeper insight that will accompany it, which will obviously cause the business to be more successful. Unfortunately, certificates or degrees are just words on paper. Those documents are not able to accurately present and evaluate one’s understanding and wisdom. That’s why so many people shake their heads in disbelief at the lack of understanding demonstrated by college graduates. Yet, parents still push their children to go through those same college systems that have done such a poor job of instilling understanding and wisdom. We know a small leak will eventually cause a ship to sink if left unaddressed. Yet, many take no “understanding” from the principle.

Lack of understanding of the market, products, services or other elements of business can bring disastrous results; it can dictate whether or not a business will sink or swim. Common sense dictates this understanding: one bad customer can take six customers away from a business. Those six multiplied and sharing the bad service they received with their friends and those with their friends, the content of the first sharing is amplified and is not necessarily

truth. Soon a good business will have a bad reputation. We all know “the whispering game” can destroy anyone’s reputation. Understanding the effects of just one action against the backdrop of running a business is but one of many ways we can see how the pillar of “understanding” creates wisdom in us.

If we observe carefully, we are able to see where “understanding” has made a big difference, where a person had knowledge or experience with certain issues but added understanding in order to make a good decision. However, it is important to know what understanding is and to learn about it, to continue to explore and improve ours.

We waste so many resources daily, one of which is our limited time. We all are ignorant to some degree which leads us to neglect facts and truth. When we have understanding we find that things are not as difficult as we thought they were. Understanding is why those who lead in societies break the limitations of society to achieve tremendous success. We benefit from the success of those leaders even though we might have disagreed or might have initially opposed them altogether.

We have come to the point of discovering if understanding is the pillar that we thought that it was. We must realize that there is a difference between understanding and knowledge. Another fact we need to consider is that making excuses and complaining are in our nature. But, they direct our thoughts to confusion. The interconnection of our standards with the many dimensions extant within an incident bring a complicated, delusional truth for us to try to comprehend. We need a good reason to believe that what has happened to us was acceptable to us so that our spirit can be at rest. But any problem we have in our society today could have been solved if only we hadn’t made excuses. We could have brought them to satisfactory conclusion. But, the sad truth is we prefer to make excuses and complain about them rather than overcome them.

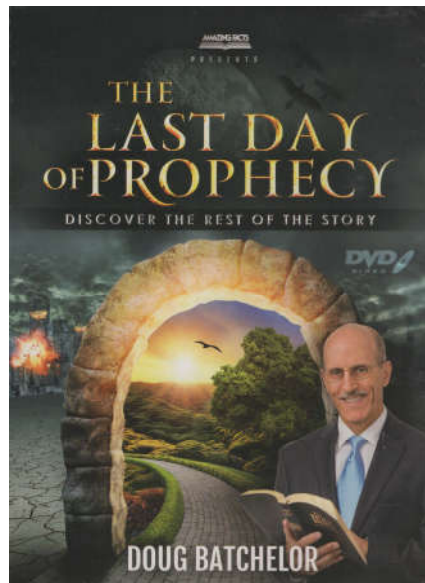
We refuse to face the real problems confronting us because we prefer to make excuses for them so that we can feel better in our “delusional truth.” After

## Did you know...?

that you can aid the BSA effort to promote the Sabbath and a Spirit of brother-hood among all who keep God’s Sabbath by becoming a BRIDGE BUILDER or a PILLAR with the BSA? Besides the monthly or annual membership dues which you can find inside the front cover, you can also help with various functions designed to help bring a fellowship of brethren across denominational lines. Some of the opportunities are: Advise and/or consult with the BSA Board of Directors; visiting and interacting with other Sabbatarian fellowships; speaking on behalf of the BSA; Promotion and/or distribution of BSA materials and services; and assisting with this magazine, the BSA Facebook page, Twitter and other social media on projects defined by the Board of Directors.

all, our understanding is far more advanced than anything else on the planet; we are the most intelligent creatures and have better understanding. Without considering whether we have proper knowledge to solve a problem, we allow ourselves to believe our excuses. This happens because of our poor “understanding” capabilities; although it handicaps us, it’s not the same as passing the buck. This, then, is one of the reasons that those little children were able to escape from their intended tormentor’s control and avoid the horrible trauma that could have happened to them. “Understanding” is the channel that gives a person insight to see behind the curtain, to analyze in more dimensions, or predict outcomes. It is not a question of how to understand “understanding,” but instead how to understand whether “understanding” is an important pillar of wisdom. It seems to us important that “understanding” is part of the rule for us to have wisdom.

Having now illustrated “understanding,” we seem to consistently misunderstand what it is and because of that we suffer needlessly. We need to focus intently on developing “understanding” as part of our path toward Wisdom. With it we can communicate more effectively with others, to engender a better connection with them for the purpose of accomplishing our goals. We observe from circumstances, or gather information, in order to have clear insight for perfect decisions. In order to have long lasting wisdom, building your “understanding” is considered fourth in order of importance.



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# The Unprodigal Son

*Lenny Cacchio*

I get aggravated when I see my internet/cable TV provider offering special discounts to new customers. I have been a loyal customer of that company for a decade, pay my bill on time every month, and my reward is an annual, albeit small increase in fees while the new guy down the street gets a special welcome.

So I can understand where that elder brother was coming from in Jesus' Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15). His wayward brother, who destroyed a third of his father's estate in a massive fit of rebellion, comes crawling home, and dad throws a huge party the likes of which that household had never seen. "Why", asks the older brother, "have you never thrown even a fraction of a party like that for me? I have been loyal, yet you celebrate that other son of yours."

Legitimate point, is it not?

Let's take a look at the lessons Jesus is trying to teach here.

First, let's realize that this parable is being directed at two specific groups. In the first few verses of this chapter we learn who the audience is. First, there is the group Luke calls "tax collectors and sinners". The second group is the "scribes and Pharisees", who were religious leaders. That second group was questioning how Jesus, if he were truly a man of God, could spend so much time hanging with those taxpayers and sinners, the outcasts of their society.

The tax collectors and sinners can be thought of as the prodigals who abandoned their heritage and their heavenly Father, while the scribes and Phari-

sees stayed true to their heritage and were trying to live by the Father's will. They were doing their best to do the right things. They worked hard, they denied themselves, and tried to live by the precepts of the law.

We often think of the Pharisees as being a strict sect of Judaism, and in a sense they often were. But one cannot say that they lacked zeal and dedication. In fact we know from the book of Acts that many Pharisees became members of the First Century church. In addition to the notorious Pharisee Saul, who later became known as Paul, and Nicodemus who helped embalm the body of Jesus, we see a party of the Pharisees who were deliberating with other Chris-



tians at the church conference in Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15. Scribes and Pharisees were not across the board evil people. Jesus could see and appreciate their zeal for God. That's why the parable ends with comforting words from the Father.

"Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found."

By these words Jesus is letting the scribes and Pharisees know that there is always room for them at the Father's table. It is up to them to accept it.

Jesus the master storyteller does not tell us how the elder son responds to this encouragement. He left the end of the story for the scribes and Pharisees themselves to write. To us also he will leave to write the end of our story, and it too is prefaced with his words, "You are always with me, and all that is mine is yours." May we be willing to celebrate once lost brothers with that fatted calf.

# Letting the Devil Redefine

## Words and Symbols

*Daniel Botkin*

I'm gay and not ashamed to admit it. Yes, readers, I'm coming out of the closet and admitting that I am gay. I'm happy and carefree. That's what the word gay means, you know—happy and carefree. At least that's what it meant four or five decades ago, and that's what I mean when I say I am gay. I mean that I am a happy, carefree guy. I'm a gay heterosexual man.

I refuse to call homosexuals gay. If I happen to meet a homosexual who is happy and carefree, I might call him a gay homosexual, but most of the homosexuals I have met do not seem very happy or carefree. They seem unhappy and miserable, not gay.

Another word the Enemy has hijacked is liberal. I'm liberal and not ashamed to admit it. I'm generous. That's what the word liberal means, you know, generous. As in "The liberal soul shall be made fat" (Prov. 11:25), or Paul's mention of the Corinthians' "liberal distribution" to the poor saints (2 Cor. 9:13), or as in the way some restaurant menus say "a liberal serving of french fries." Liberal means generous. So I'm a liberal conservative. And as Proverbs 11:25 says, the liberal soul shall be made fat, which explains why I've added a few pounds as I've gotten older.

A theological term the Enemy has redefined and perverted is the term "the law." If you are talking about the Bible and say something positive about "the law," it raises red flags in the minds of some Christians. These Christians have let the Devil redefine God's law as something negative and bad. They associate "the law" with ideas like bondage, legalism, oppression, religious hypocrisy, and nit-picky rules of the Pharisees. As a result, they think that God's Torah is opposed to God's grace and is something to be avoided and shunned. So they

bend over backwards to prove that they are not legalists. They think that believers who want to obey the Torah are legalists - which, if true, would mean that believers who do not want to obey the Torah are illegalists.

A synonym for the word legal is lawful. The Bible says that a man is not crowned for his labor for the Lord "unless he strives lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5). The Devil has redefined the word law, and he has modified its synonym legal with suffixes (legalism, legalist, legalistic) so that Christians rarely if ever think of the term legal in a theological sense unless it has the suffix -ism, -ist, or -istic attached to it (even though the words legalism, legalist, and legalistic do not appear anywhere in the Bible, at least not in the KJV).

So I guess I need to come out of the theological closet and admit that I'm a legalist. That is, I strive lawfully in my labor for the Lord. I do not transgress God's laws in order to labor for God's kingdom.

The Enemy has not only redefined words, he has also redefined symbols and symbolic actions to rob God's people of blessings. He has redefined bad things as good. In the Roman Catholic Church, he has redefined pagan religious customs such as bowing down and reverencing graven images, praying to dead saints, and venerating relics of dead saints - bad things which displease the Lord - as good things which please the Lord.

The Enemy not only redefines bad things as good, he also redefines good things as bad. The rainbow, for example. From Genesis to Revelation, the rainbow is a good symbol in the Bible. In Genesis 9 the rainbow is a reminder of God's promise to not flood the earth again. In Revelation 4 a rainbow circles the throne of God. But the Enemy has hijacked the rainbow and uses it as a symbol to cele-

brate sexual perversions which are abominations to God.

Because the perverts claim the rainbow as their symbol to celebrate sexual perversity, should Bible believers shun pictures of rainbows for fear that people might think they are celebrating sexual perversion?

I do not know what other believers think, but I say No. Why should we let the Enemy rob us of something good? I'm a gay, liberal, rainbow-loving legalist. But please don't quote me out of context. In the context of this article, that just means I'm a happy, carefree, generous guy who appreciates the beauty of God's creation and who lives within the boundaries of God's laws. So I do not shun rainbows. Although I admit I would not wear a rainbow shirt in the vicinity of a Perverts' Pride Parade.

It's kind of funny yet sad how some believers just let the Enemy hijack words and symbols. If the Enemy lays claim to some word or symbol, we are not obligated to let go of it and shun it. Yet that is exactly what some Bible believers have done. Let's look at a few examples.

Amish men believe they should grow beards, but they shave off the moustache above their lips. Why? Because hundreds of years ago, it was common for military leaders to have big moustaches. The Amish are pacifists. They did not want to be associated with military warfare, so they shaved off their moustaches to make a point. And they still shave them off today, even though moustaches are no longer thought of as a symbol of military warfare.

In the 1960s and 70s, shaggy hair and beards were associated with beatniks, hippies, and rebellion. As a result, shaggy hair and beards were frowned on in some churches. In the 1980s I was offered the position of principal at a Christian school. I was told that I would have to shave off my beard if I accepted the job. Some of the parents sending their children to the school believed that a Christian man should shave off the God-given beard from his face and make his face hair-free and smooth like a woman's. That was the Christian thing to do, in their

opinion, so it was wrong for a Christian man to have a beard, like Jesus and the Apostles did.

Even the choosing of baby names by believers has been affected by society's tendency to stereotype people according to certain things. People in the world associate certain names with things like intelligence, appearance, and behavior. Most Americans expect a woman named Prudence to have high morals and to not be very cheerful. They expect a man named Rock to be a macho man with rather low morals. And he might be a bit dim-witted. This is not just my theory. I have read studies that prove this.

History likewise proves it. Many years ago I read a book, published in 1897, called *Curiosities of Puritan Nomenclature* by Charles W. Bardsley. According to this book, the Protestant Reformation brought about major changes in English names. As Catholic influence declined and Protestant influence increased in England, people ceased naming their children after extra-Biblical saints. Such names sounded "too Catholic." The names of the Apostles were also avoided, because those names were popular among the Catholics. Peter was especially avoided because it "smacked of popery." People in Protestant England began using some of the more obscure and seldomly-used Bible names, especially ones from the Old Testament.

English parents began making almost exclusive use of Biblical names, so having a Bible name became the norm. Even sinners had names from the Bible. The Puritans wanted to do something to distinguish their children from the children of the "im-Puritans." So instead of giving their children the names of Biblical people, the Puritans gave them names of Biblical principles or virtues, such as Joy, Grace, Faith, Hope, and Charity, names which are still acceptable for girls today.

Amiable, Blessed, Chaste, and many other descriptive words were used as names by the Puritans. Increase Mather is a name which students of American history should recognize. Often names like No-merit, Humiliation, Dust, and Ashes were given as reminders of the importance of humility before

God. There are records of Puritan children named Forsaken, Sinner, Sorry, Lament, and Repentance.

Hyphenated phrases such as Sorry-for-Sin and Search-the-Scriptures were also used as names. These were real names of real people.

Sometimes an extremely long name would be shortened in actual usage. For example, there was a sea captain whose parents had named a son "Through-Much-Tribulation-We-Enter-the-Kingdom-of-Heaven." He called himself "Tribby" for short. Another man with a long name was "If-Christ-had-not-died-for-thee-thou-would-have-been-damned" Barebone. He was known as Damned Barebone. This trend continued among the Puritans until about 1640, though some cases are recorded as late as the eighteenth century.

Like the Amish shaving off their moustaches to distinguish themselves from military officers, or like the Puritans giving their children unusual names to distinguish them from the children of "im-Puritans," so the Jews have instituted certain customs for the sole purpose of distinguishing themselves from the Gentiles. Standing for prayer, for example. Even though kneeling in prayer is mentioned in the Jewish Bible, Jews do not kneel in prayer. They stand to distinguish themselves from Christians who sometimes kneel in prayer.

I had a Messianic Jewish friend in New York who told me that before he was a believer in Yeshua, he once asked an Orthodox Jewish friend, "Why do we only pray the prayers that are written in the siddur [prayer book]? Why don't we ever just use our own

words to pray to God?"

His friend replied, "Because that's goyish." In other words, that's how the Gentiles, the goyim, pray. We Jews are going to refrain from praying in our own words, to distinguish ourselves from the Gentiles. (To be fair, though, there are Jews who sometimes pray in their own words.)

Jews will even adopt customs to distinguish themselves from other Jews. I know of at least one Jewish custom that Orthodox Jews instituted for the sole purpose of distinguishing themselves from the Karaite Jews: the lighting of Sabbath candles. I have read in two different Jewish sources that the reason the rabbis started the custom of lighting Sabbath candles was to spite the Karaite Jews, who taught that it was unlawful not only to kindle a fire on Shabbat, but also unlawful to enjoy the benefit of a fire, even if it was kindled before Shabbat started. The rabbis said, in effect, "No, it is lawful to enjoy the benefits of a fire on Shabbat, provided it is started before Shabbat. And to make our point, we're going to light candles shortly before the Sabbath, and enjoy those candles until they burn all the way down. So Shabbat Shalom, Karaites!"

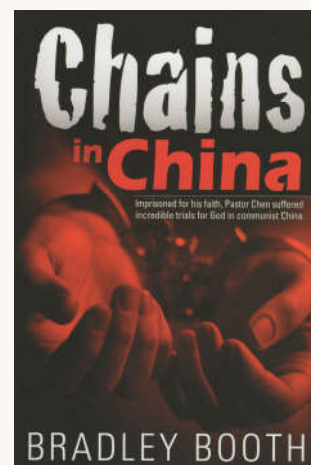
There are probably some Messianic believers out there somewhere who make it a point to not light Sabbath candles just to spite the rabbis. "We'll enjoy the Sabbath without following your man-made commandment to light candles. So Shabbat Shalom, rabbis!"

Some Jews will even make a point of using a different word than Gentiles use for the same thing. I

## CHAINS IN CHINA

by Bradley Booth

In 1960, Chen, a faithful young Seventh-day Adventist, was imprisoned and thrown into "the cage" for refusing to work on the Sabbath. In spite of living in the worst kind of filth and subsisting on a starvation diet, Chen looked for every opportunity to tell his fellow prisoners and prison officials about the loving God he served. B246 \$15.00 + \$2.00 shipping





read a story in The Jewish Press several years ago. The writer, a Jewish man who grew up in New York, said that one day when he was a boy he asked his mother for a dill pickle. His mother corrected him. "They're sour pickles," she said. "The goyim call them dill pickles. We call them sour pickles."

Preferring one word over another, or even doing something like shaving off one's moustache, or giving children unusual names, or lighting Sabbath candles to spite the Karaites (or not lighting candles to spite the rabbis) can be relatively harmless. However, Bible believers need to make sure that in their zeal to distinguish themselves from the heathens (or from the rabbis) they not do something that robs them of God's blessings.

I once read an article in a Sacred Name magazine that said the heathens lifted up their hands when they praised and worshipped their false gods. The article had pictures of archeological finds which depicted heathens doing this. Therefore we should not lift up our hands when we praise and worship Yahweh, the article said, because our methods of worship should not be borrowed from the heathens. Apparently these Sacred Name folks do not realize who borrowed from whom. By their refusal to ever obey the Bible's commandment to lift up holy hands in prayer, they let the Enemy rob them of a blessing.

A few years ago I watched a short video in which I saw another example of believers letting the Enemy redefine a Biblical symbol and thereby deprive themselves of blessings. The video was a very short documentary film about young Muslims in Iran who are abandoning Islam and coming to Christ. In Iran, this puts the believers' lives at risk, so they have to meet in secret to pray and fellowship.

The basic content of the film was very good. It showed how zealous and bold and devoted these young believers in Iran are. They deserve our admiration and deep respect. But there was one thing that surprised and disappointed me. When the film showed one of their worship meetings, the very first thing the women did when they came into the room was to strip off their head coverings and cast them aside before they entered into worship.

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The narrator of the film even made a point to mention this to the viewers. Why do the women so quickly and eagerly strip off their head coverings before they worship? Because Islam requires them to wear head coverings, and they therefore view the woman's head covering as a symbol of oppression, misogyny, and false religion.

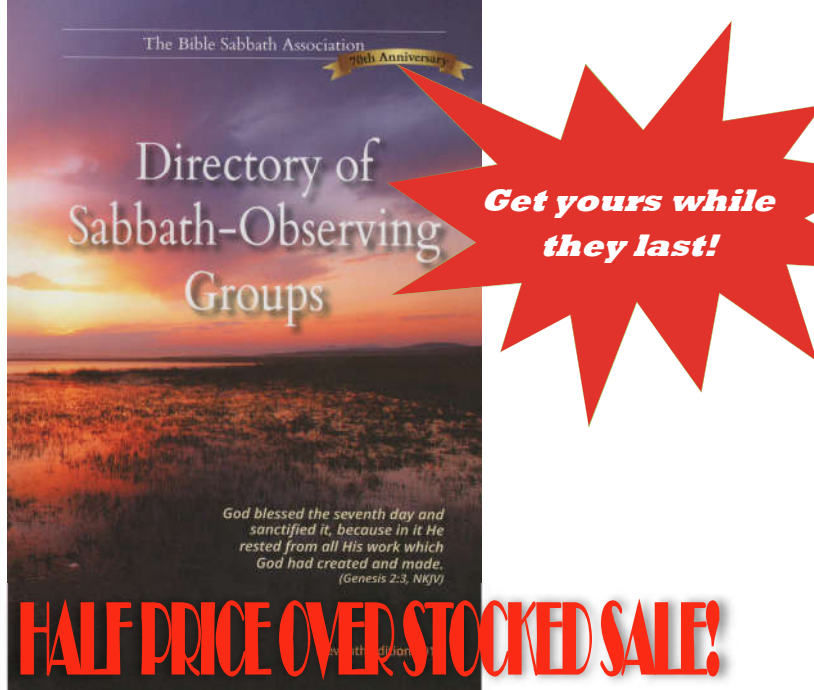
I can understand why these formerly-Muslim women feel that way about the woman's head covering. But our feelings should be irrelevant to the question of whether or not a woman should wear a head covering. The only thing relevant to the head covering question is what the Bible says about it. According to the Bible, the woman's head covering does not represent oppression, misogyny, or false religion. On the contrary, according to the Bible it represents submission and safety, purity and protection. (Of course feminists will say that submission is the same as oppression, but that's true only if you let the God-hating, rebellious worldlings define submission. According to the Bible, submission to authority is good, not bad; it is something that we are commanded to do, not something to despise.)

These women in Iran are letting the Enemy hijack a good Biblical symbol, redefine its meaning, and thereby rob them of blessings. It reminds me of the words of the Bride in the Song of Solomon:

"The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the wall took away my veil from me" (Song 5:7).

The Enemy has used Islam to make something beautiful look ugly in the eyes of these daughters of God in Iran, and these daughters have believed the Enemy's lie.

Whether we are talking about words or symbols, we do not have to accept the Devil's redefinitions. We should not believe his lies that good things are bad, and bad things are good. The Devil does not have authority over our dictionaries. All authority in heaven and in earth has been given to Yeshua (Matt. 28:18), and that authority includes authority to declare what is good and what is bad.



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# CHURCH AT HOME

*Darl E. Arbogast*

Personally I am very glad for the Bible Sabbath Association and for the magazine "The Sabbath Sentinel". This magazine is a good vehicle for "Church of God" members to air our understandings which vary from group to group.

I have collected many books over the years which were out-of-print but available through the BSA. Recently I decided to read again the book called "History of the Sabbath" by J. N. Andrews first published in 1887.

The 'Church at Home' topic is being examined by



some and as for me I am very thankful for several reasons. To illustrate a good example suppose an elderly person is in poor health, has no transportation and the nearest local Church of God congregation is miles away but this person is very eager to hear the Word of God, is spiritually hungry and has 'Church at Home' as a viable option. What a blessing for that person!

It seems some of our brethren haven't yet realized those called by God the Father are given a spiritual calling not a physical one. I believe most Church of God followers know we are spiritual Israel and due to their individual circumstances they know they belong in the body of Christ. These individuals may be out of a corporate local body but that is a physical institution, neither are they necessarily misfits because they do fit into the spiritual body of Christ.

Many church magazines and church newspapers, plus sports programs between churches, as well as fund raisers, were a big part of WCG when we left it. One event after the other leaves little time for the Bible and can be a part of the doctrine of Nicolaitans which God hates.

One good reason why some stay away from such church organizations is because of the "Doctrine of Nicolaitans" as written in III John 9,10 NKJ - 9 "I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. 10 Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church."

There are possibly a few misfits but many times this is largely due to people making calendars contrary to the calculated Hebrew Calendar and getting people confused with heresy.

Building a hierarchy or an oligarchy such as the Roman Catholic Church has also keeps some people away; this was the main problem we had with WCG.

There were many broken hearts when the WCG disintegrated, looking for a physical corporation

many of them didn't know where to go to worship; they looked for a physical organization and a lot of start-up groups were organized. Christ was there watching and waiting for people to get over the shock, some did and some didn't; some returned to Sunday observance.

Matthew 18:20 NKJ – (Jesus said), "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

Matthew 18:20 tells us what we are to do if only we have the presence of mind to realize it.

Some ministers had forethought and had enough vision to put sermons, free of charge, on DVD's and CD's, and send them out to the people; those who did not have a congregation to go to on the Sabbath. After a time, many people did gather in smaller groups, praying, singing and listening as they have 'Church at Home' today; just like they did in the first century.

There is no hierarchy, the host is in charge under Christ, and the people worship God and have a happy Sabbath together. Each week the host and/or hostess for that Sabbath will be in charge of the meeting held probably in their own home.

The beauty of all of this is we do not have to put down local roots with any group we can visit among brethren far and wide, we have long term friendships with brethren all across the Country as we "flutter from flower to flower". We do not need roots what we need is the "Nectar from the flower".

Among Christians of the Church of God there are issues to resolve, understandings to share and a great need to communicate with each other, personally and group to group. The 'Directory of Sabbath-Observing Groups' published by The Bible Sabbath Association is an excellent tool to use to be able to connect and to worship with others of a like mind.

We understand that all groups will not be on the same page about everything until the return of Jesus Christ. We are not to argue over our differences like politicians do but we should instead be willing to "lend our hearts and our minds to understanding" and occasionally we will change our own personal

views on some things as we are led by God's Holy Spirit.

Luke 24:45 NKJ - "And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures."

Indulge me here for a moment please! I personally am a vintage world wider and was baptized July 1967. It should be quite natural for my understanding to be in that vein and I would probably still be with WCG if they had not broken up. After WCG did break up several of us shied away from new start-ups as it was difficult to settle in for one reason or another with some of the so-called independent groups.

It was about this time that I started to order books from Richard Nichols at BSA and have continued to do so even after his death. I learned what the 'Doctrine of Nicolaitans' was and I wrote an article on the subject. It didn't take much time before a leader of a rather large Independent 'Church of God' group located in Dalton Georgia read my article and invited me to come and speak to this group. I felt challenged and at the same time very blessed and honored when I was invited to keep the 'Feast of Tabernacles' with them and serve as a speaker, which I did. Other speakers were also invited and I was asked to speak every fifth or sixth week on the Sabbath. Other speakers dropped out, but I spoke continuously for about ten years.

As time continued on, I hosted the 'Feast of Tabernacles' two years in a row for a minister located in California; then conducted a Bible Study at another Independent Church of God twice a month for two years.

After moving to the mountains I was asked to Pastor another Independent Church of God group which I did for a couple of years until I retired from pastoring. God was not finished with me yet because He gave me the inspiration to publish a monthly newsletter, 'The Newport Plain Truth', free for the asking and paid for by donations. These newsletters are mailed out each month through the postal service.

My main goal in life is to serve the brethren, there is

always plenty to do. I still accept requests to come and speak when I am invited and able to do so. I have traveled to Lorain, Ohio and officiated a funeral and recently spoke at a funeral in Dalton, Georgia. I have traveled to Acworth, Georgia to speak to a fairly large group at the 'Feast of Tabernacles' in 2016; which I considered an honor.

The peace and comfort God has extended to me is fulfilling and rewarding, using my talents and skills; a gift God has given to me. My way of thinking is always to try and do what God asks of me, this is very humbling and rewarding.

In Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testament words, the word serve is #1249, #1398, #1247 or diakoneo "to minister" or serve the brethren.

Metaphorically speaking when each of us was baptized we took the plow by the handles, we must be serious and not give up as it is written in Luke 9:62 NKJ - "But Jesus said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'"

The hardest thing not to do, in my view, is for brethren not to be judgmental toward one another; it is not beneficial to criticize others doctrinally. Spiritually it is a good idea to plant a seed of instructions for righteousness sake but it is very important to let God provide the increase.

What we have experienced from our past with the Church should be a good experience to share with others. Hopefully the younger generation will take to heart what has happened with us in regard to their future.

To those that may be wanting a congregation within a large corporation I can tell you; be careful what you wish for! If you had been in WCG back in the day you probably would not want to be in that kind of a set up now.

Acts 5:42 - "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."

# Blaine Neumann

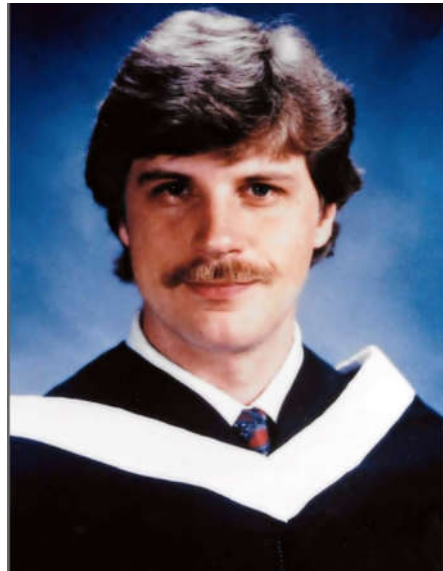
*October 18, 1963 ~ December 24, 2017*

Submitted by John Lemley

Blaine loved biblical Greek and Hebrew at which he excelled, and he could take you to the exact location on the wooded home acreage where rare tiny orchids and ghost-white Indian pipe saprophytes grew. His sense of direction, eye for detail, and recall of landmarks was, in my experience, infallible.

Blaine was multi-talented, the most talented of my parents' children, it seemed to me. Besides his gifts with music and languages both dead and alive (he also read German), Blaine was always drawing. As an adult, I enlisted his talent as a cartoonist to create posters promoting a special speaker I was hosting for weekend meetings at the CUC church. Perceptive of detail and aware of how people are viewed, he created immediately-recognizable and engaging stereotype characters like The Jock, The Blonde, and The Brain.

Attending Adventist schools through high school at Parkland Adventist Academy, Blaine came into his own as a scholar at CUC. He enjoyed academia, and pursued historical research all his life. He also shone in the musical realm, which allowed him to earn scholarships during the summer as part of CUC's camp meeting touring group. He paid his own way entirely through a Bachelor of Arts in Religion degree from Canadian University College, and the equivalent of a degree from the North American Baptist College in Edmonton, where he focussed on his passion for the history of the Christian Church. Perhaps in part because of our family's history, on which Blaine was the authority, the history of the Sabbath was a topic of endless fascination, and he published his research on some fine points in *The Sabbath Sentinel*. His book, *A History of the Seventh-day Sabbath among Christians in Asia, Africa, Europe and North America*, was dis-



tributed through the Bible Sabbath Association.

Blaine never met an instrument he couldn't quickly gain some facility with, and for some years played in an accordion band, but the tuba and piano were his favorites.

When he was in high school, Blaine refined his vision. Henry and I were student missionaries in Majuro, in the Marshall Islands, and Henry casually remarked early in our stay that the kids were very musical. Blaine, without telling us or discussing his idea with our parents, began haunting the pawn shops of Edmonton, finding bargain brass instruments, and negotiating for them to assemble a very respectable brass band collection—all in time for our planned family Christmas in Hawaii.

He would go on to tour China with the University of Alberta chamber choir when he studied music in Edmonton, and was at Tiananmen Square the day before one of the most iconic moments in modern history—the student protest and massacre that shocked the world and marked a decisive shift in China's history.

He left heated debate to those who enjoy the emotional tempest engendered by the desire to win. He was a pilgrim, and he had no time for battles of the ego. And perhaps that is what I will miss the most about Blaine—his quiet wisdom about the humility that truth demands. He was a true seeker who respected the courage of those who went before and the humanity of those around him, one who only wanted to do what was right and kind.

He was a gentle giant who laid down his life every day for his brother.

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