

THE FAITH BUILDER

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

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From The Editor

I believe that a developing and growing church is one that preaches the Gospel as its main purpose for being there. There are some who misquote Hebrews 6:1, which says: "Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God" and teach that we ignore the basics of the Gospel and go on to "higher things". But this is not what the writer to the Hebrews meant. He meant that we don't have to go back and be re-converted, or baptised again, or to go into disputes and debates with other believers about them. He did not say that we are to stop believing the basics or discontinue having the basics as our foundation for faith. To leave the foundations of our faith exposes us to the danger of being sidetracked and deceived into going off into areas which may stop the support and assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Anyhow, the "higher things" that many have gone into mainly turning out to be side issues and unimportant aspects of the faith that are not essential to the work of The Holy Spirit in and through us. You will find that most of the divisions in churches have involved doctrines and teachings that have a low priority, from the ridiculous, like which side of the church the piano should be; to the questionable, such as whether a church service should be liturgical or unstructured; to the financial, like who should control the church finances – the treasurer or pastor; or the doctrinal, such as what name should people be baptised in, whether people should speak in tongues as a prerequisite to salvation, or whether having fashionable hairstyles or clothing is a sign of "worldliness". Sadly, many churches have divided over these issues, and these divisions have seriously set back the advance of the Gospel in the communities around them.

It has been proved through the history of the Early Church, and subsequent Church history, especially the history of Christian revivals, that it is the preaching of the Gospel that has caused the power of the Holy Spirit to flow mightily, and has attracted unconverted sinners to churches where they have been confronted with the Gospel, been able to understand, not just some surface principles, but the full truth of what the Gospel is all about, and then have made Jesus Christ their Saviour and Lord. The evidence that an unconverted person has been truly converted is that he or she becomes a permanent church member, solidly going on for Christ.

Many people have gone up to the front of meetings and made “decisions” and have signed the decision card, but the statistics show that not more than ten percent of those people become solid, long-term church members. Jesus talked about this in Luke 8:6, where He described the sowing of the seed. He spoke of seed falling on rocky ground where the soil base was very shallow. The plants grew very quickly, but because there was no real foundation, they withered and died in a very short time. This described the unconverted person receiving the “seed” of the Gospel and receiving it with joy, making a “decision” for Christ, joining up with a church, and appearing to make a great start in the Christian faith. Then persecution comes, followed by the challenge of having to give up favourite sins and pastimes, and the requirement to give up all for Christ; or there is the disappointment of seeing that other believers are not perfect, but have shortcomings. The new Christian is unable to stand for Christ because he has no foundation and falls away. One person I know, who made such a decision for Christ and then after a short time decided to leave the church and become an atheist, told me that it was “because of the hypocrites in the church”. He must have gone through an experience where he encountered members of that church who did not meet his expectations. This offended him and he fell away from Christ. I wonder if he really understood the central truths of the Gospel? I would say that he did not experience the full conviction of his own sinfulness before God, and his decision was probably based on a mental agreement that he would be better off having a Christian faith, joining a church, and then life would be all “rosy” for him. I don’t think that he realised that becoming converted to Christ is a serious agreement between him and God that he would follow Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord.

The other thing I want to mention is that there is nothing to compare with having years of experience in the Christian faith. When a person first comes to Christ, the transformation and the realisation of this new and exciting life can make a young person feel that they know so much about the power of God and the effectiveness of the Gospel that they can go out and automatically “change the world”. But after 30 to 40 years of experience, there is the sense of shame and humility that makes the person realise that they are powerless in themselves to do anything of themselves, and if there is any good accomplished it comes through the work of The Holy Spirit through them. But it is a difficult experience to realise this, but what it means is the death of one’s pride and arrogance. This is why Paul told Timothy not to choose a novice in the faith to take on the role of church leadership. A young, new convert may have the confidence, and maybe the natural ability to be a leader, but does not have the experience that would give him or her the humility to know that it is The Holy Spirit Who does the work; and therefore tries to do the work of ministry without spending the time in prayer and the study of God’s Word that it takes to enable The Holy Spirit to work effectively through him.

It was with sadness, when I was involved with a large Charismatic church, to see new converts made deacons and homegroup leaders, and given authority over others; especially when the church had a “pyramid” structure which forced groups of people to be “under the authority” of a young, inexperienced home group leader who often used authoritarian, “power and control” methods of working with the members of his group.

This was one of the very negative outcomes of the “shepherding/discipleship” movement that was popular in the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches during the 1970s and 1980s. This caused great distress and heartache to many good people during that time, and who knows how many walked away from the Church and from Christ through it?

What it meant for members was that if they had a problem, the more experienced leaders from whom they could get sound advice were unavailable to them because of the church rule that the member had to consult with his homegroup leader first. This caused a lot of distress and harm to members because of unsound advice, wrong doctrine coming from young “leaders” who had not the experience to do any better.

It doesn't matter how experienced a believer is, or how many years he or she has been in the Christian faith, everyone is living under the shadow of the Cross, and we will never leave it. We may not always talk about or discuss the foundations of the Christian faith, but we will always be aware that the work of Jesus on the Cross, His resurrection, the importance of living a holy life, and preparing for the Judgment to come, are the foundations on which to build a successful and effective Christian life.

Sermon
St Aidan's Church
10 March 2013

Forsaken of God?

Text: **"My God, My God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?"** (Psalm 22:1).

This is a prophetic psalm. It describes the cries of Jesus while He was suffering and dying on the Cross.

The Father had to turn His back on Jesus because Jesus was taking our sin upon Himself, and because the Father cannot have any fellowship with sin, His fellowship with Jesus was broken.

But even though He had to turn His back, He did not stop loving Jesus, and was waiting for the moment when the work of substitution was finished so He could take an active part in Jesus' resurrection.

God had not actually forsaken Jesus, but in the middle of the intense suffering He was experiencing. Jesus had the perception that the Father had forsaken Him.

It was not just the physical suffering that caused Him to cry out, but it was the first-time separation between the Father and Him that caused Him the greatest anguish.

It seemed that His normal reasoning had been suspended under the effects of his suffering, and caused Him to see things from his human view – that the Father had actually forsaken Him.

Implications for us

God has never forsaken us.

God will not forsake anyone unless they had forsaken Him first.

It was Adam who disobeyed, and then ran away from God and hid when God came calling after him in the Garden of Eden.

Ever since that time, God has been working out His plan of salvation, to reconcile Himself with man.

“God is not willing that any should perish, but that all may come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

“Jesus has come to seek and save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

People forsake God by refusing His offer of salvation through Christ, coming to His throne of grace, and ignoring His requirements of holiness and separation from the world.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have

gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" (Matthew 23:37).

"Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves" (Romans 1:24).

There is only one prayer that God will hear from unconverted people, and that is to acknowledge their own sinfulness and to plead God for mercy and grace.

How to unconverted people forsake God?

1. Refusing to listen to the Gospel message.
2. Preferring to live a sinful life instead of seeking God for holiness.
3. Making worldly honour, wealth and status the priority of life.
4. Trying to be religious and self-righteous in themselves instead of relying on the grace of God.
5. Having a man-pleasing attitude, preferring to go with the opinions of others instead of staying true to God's Word.
6. Being distracted from the service of God by business, pleasure, personal ambition.

Repentance and conversion involves a complete change of heart and attitude toward Christ.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

This is to do with people weary of the sinful life and burdened by their guilt.

The advantages of being truly converted

1. Having a purified and cleansed soul.

2. Being free from the slavery of the flesh.
3. Being illuminated and alive to God by faith.
4. Enabled to come and serve God.
5. Having boldness of access to God through prayer.
6. A sealed pardon of all our sins.
7. An interest in Christ who will speak for us before the Father and justify us.
8. Have peace of conscience and a joyful hope.
9. To have communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.
10. Having fellowship with other believers.
11. Being under many and precious promises, and God's protection.
12. Having everything working together for our good.
13. Having a foresight of heaven and everlasting happiness.

None of these are available to unconverted people.

Who would, in his right mind, choose to forsake God and all these wonderful things?

The unconverted do, because they are blinded to the reality of their state by the devil. Many religious people think they are okay, and take it for granted that because they come to church every Sunday and observe the outward ceremonies of our services, that God will accept them.

This is one of the main deceptions of the devil – to make unconverted people think they are converted and will finally be accepted by God when they come up for judgment.

Most people we speak to who believe in an after-life, believing that when a person dies they are at rest and peace and go to a better place. This is what the devil wants them to believe. This stops them from seriously testing their belief in the light of the Gospel.

If they knew their true state and what awaits them, they would be beating down the door of churches, pleading and begging for salvation.

The majority in hell today did not expect to go there. They expected to go to a better place, and now it is too late for them.

They took life for granted instead of subjecting themselves to a rigorous test of their belief structure and attitude toward Christ and the Gospel.

Seeing that the issue of heaven and hell is so great, and the finality of a person's state when they go out into eternity, isn't it so important that we examine ourselves while we are here, so that if there are any problems with our salvation, we can resolve them before it is too late?

Most will discover their true state only when the Holy Spirit will reveal it to them, either here while they are still alive, or at the Judgment when it will be too late for them to make amends.

Sincere believers who have a good understanding of the Gospel and who have given their hearts to Christ, will have no fears about being rigorously tested and will gladly conduct self-examination to make sure that they are in the faith. This is an important sign of true conversion to Christ.

Hypocrites will oppose the idea of testing, because in their hearts, they love darkness rather than light and will not risk having the true state of their hearts exposed. The devil will also work very hard to make sure that these people will remain blinded to the truth.

So, the choice is yours. **"Examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith"** (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Jesus went through intense physical and spiritual suffering to take our sin upon Himself. He encountered a complete separation between Him and His Father for the first time in eternity.

The Father and Jesus thought that this was worthwhile to bring salvation to those who would believe in Christ.

Did Jesus suffer and die in vain for you?

Or was His death and resurrection the means for you to be enlightened to enable you to understand the Gospel, to receive saving grace, and receive the Holy Spirit into your life?

Jesus asked His disciples whether they would leave Him when He made the conditions of following Him very strict. Peter replied: **"Where can we go? You have the words of eternal life"** (John 6:68).

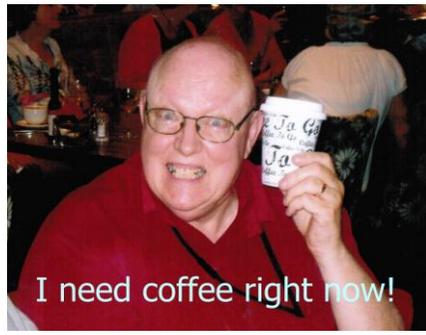
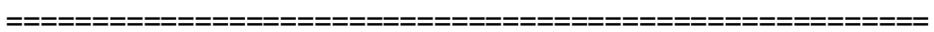
If a person walks away from God and His Gospel, there is only one place he can go, and it does not involve eternal life, but an eternity of misery.

"How shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3).

But if we come and take hold of God's throne of grace, He will never cast us out.

God said **"I will never leave you nor forsake you"** (Hebrews 13:5).

So let us therefore examine ourselves and submit to the Gospel test to ensure that Jesus did not die in vain for you and for me.



“Jesus never compared the Kingdom of God to a religious experience in a temple, but with a party or celebration!” says church growth consultant Andrew Jones

Humor and the Gospel

Using jokes and fun in Christian communication

“The Gospel is too serious a matter to present in a serious manner”

Humor is very valuable in evangelism and Christian communication because:

- humor breaks down barriers and can smuggle ideas and challenges into people’s hearts.
- a joke or humorous situation is often very memorable.
- it shows that we don’t take ourselves too seriously, that we are not ‘holy Joes’, killjoys, or boring.
- humor has been shown to be an essential component of [adult learning](#).
- most importantly, because we have a biblical mandate to use humor!

Says who?

- “Laughter is the shortest distance between two people.” (Victor Borge)
- “What soap is to the body, laughter is to the soul.” (Yiddish Proverb)
- “If somebody makes me laugh, I’m his slave for life.” (Bette Midler)
- Says writer Rabbi Shmuley Boteach: “Humor allows us to approach threatening subjects in a non-threatening way... Most people find it difficult to receive information from someone who has little or no sense of humor.”
- “You cannot teach people unless you have their attention. . . by using illustrations, questions and even humor. Most people don’t like to be preached at, but most people like to be talked to.” (*Firm Foundations*, by Trevor McIlwain, New Tribes Mission)

- “Anyone who takes himself too seriously always runs the risk of looking ridiculous; anyone who can consistently laugh at himself does not.” (Vaclav Havel)
- [Spurgeon’s](#) emphasis on humor in Christian proclamation and living was so marked that it occupies a whole chapter in his autobiography. There is no doubt that his humor was a major factor in his ability to communicate clearly – he was able to “get away” with very strong statements precisely because they rode on the back of jest.
- “If you ask me, I think it is often just as sacred to laugh as it is to pray . . . or preach . . . or witness. But then – laughter is a witness in many ways. We have been misled by a twisted, unbalanced mind if we have come to think of laughter and fun as being carnal or even questionable.” (Chuck Swindoll, in his article says [The Winsome Witness](#). [Winsome = win some?])
- “Research shows that when people laugh together, they not only enjoy themselves, but they are more receptive to new ideas,” says [Outreach Comedy](#)– a ministry which arranges comedy events for evangelism.
- Christian humorist, writer and evangelist Jim Watkins writes, “Humor is one language that everyone can understand. It breaks down barriers between people. If you can share a laugh with someone, you’ve connected with that person. The defenses come down, and there’s a desire to continue the dialog. And secondly, humor is ‘laughing gas’. You’re not going to stay in the dentist’s chair and allow him or her to drill away on a root canal unless you’re hopped up with plenty of anesthetic. So humor is the laughing gas that allows us to drill away at the abscessed areas of another person’s life.” For more of Jim’s valuable insights, see his article [Using Humor to Spread the Word](#).
- In the old days of kings who ruled with absolute power, only the court jester could safely tell the King the truth, mediated through humor. Anyone else who attempted plain speaking was in danger of an ongoing head-loss situation.
- The word *basar* (preach) in, for example, [Isaiah 61](#) carries a strong implication of, if not exactly humor, then cheerfulness. Strong’s Concordance says the word means “to be fresh, i.e. full (rosy, fig.

cheerful; to announce (glad news) ... bear, carry, preach, tell good tidings."

Beware Of...

A Form Of Godliness

By Rodney W. Francis

"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was"
(2 Timothy 3:1-9, NKJV).

These verses are a continuation of 2 Timothy 2, (which should also be read). They reveal clearly to us that those who live undisciplined lives, and who "do their own thing," and set their own standards for life, also continue to carry beliefs of "a form of godliness." "Form" is "mere appearance that has no relation to reality." It is "outward form" (TEV, NRSV), "outward appearance" (NJB), to "make a pretense" (NABR), or

“maintain a facade” (Phillips).

“Godliness,” however, has to do with the way we live. It impacts and changes our lives. As the word “godliness” infers, it has to do with holiness, to living like God. Yet we see from the Scriptures quoted above, that people will fall into a habit of living ungodly lives, yet at the same time continue to hold to “a form of godliness”! “A form of godliness” does not alter the way a person lives! It allows them to do what they want to do – to set their own standards, and yet proclaim that it is acceptable to God, and is therefore “Godly” what they believe, and do. This is the big deception of religion today. It allows “standards” that God disapproves of, yet seeks to convince us that it is, in fact, acceptable. The religious world has no serious convictions about passing their legislation that encourages people to live in direct rebellion to the Scriptures. There are three things that I want to bring out in this message:

1. Having a form of godliness.

2. Denying the power of godliness.

3. From such turn away.

A FORM OF GODLINESS:

Christianity was never ever “a form of godliness.” It has always been the “real thing” – godliness is that lifestyle which glorifies God. It is that which allows the Holy Spirit to set God’s standards in our life. Godliness sets the pattern for us – not us dictating to God what is acceptable, and what is not acceptable. If our belief system does not change our lives, and bring us into a more direct and closer walk and personal relationship with Jesus Christ, then we have to seriously question its authenticity! It does not matter whether “a form of godliness” comes from a prophet or a pope, a dynamic

preacher or a church system – if it does not line up with the clear teachings of Scripture, turn away from it. Tragically, so many of our religious systems today can only demonstrate “a form of godliness.” Yet, many of them started out in the fires of Holy Spirit revival. Over time, the standards have deteriorated, and the conviction between right and wrong has become less and less, until today we see “right is wrong” and “wrong is right,” and “God is such a God of love He won’t turn anyone away from eternal life,” etc. This “form of godliness” is a lie. It is a false doctrine of “every one doing that which is right in their own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

I think one of the greatest tragedies and shocks in life anyone could ever have, would be to go to church faithfully all their life, yet never really know Jesus, and then, when they stand before God, to hear Him say, “Depart from Me, I never knew you” (Matthew 7:21-23). Yet that is exactly what “a form of godliness” does to people. It is a deception that allows them to set lower standards for their lives than that which is acceptable to God. It allows people to justify their character traits, make excuses for their selfish lifestyles, live in sin, and persecute the believers of the truth, etc. Yet, ironically, they still believe they have an authority to “speak on behalf of God”! They believe they know better than the truth of Jesus Christ. They believe “a form of godliness” allows them to be “lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:2-4). All those traits corrupt us, rather than make us more godlike. Yet, in spite of all these things, they still cling on to “a form of godliness” to make it “all right.” We certainly need to ask ourselves this question: “Whose standards are we living by?” “Ours?” Or, “God’s”?

BUT DENYING THE POWER OF GODLINESS:

If there is one thing that reveals "a form of godliness," it is the lack of true spiritual power that it demonstrates. There is no power to change lives! Its "power" is in words, customs, cultural things, but not in God! The true Gospel power is denied. To "deny" the power is "to contradict, i.e. disavow, reject, abnegate" (Strong's). When we are living a godly life we have a power and an authority in our life to "do that which is right in the sight of the Lord" (that is, obeying His voice) (Exodus 15:16; Deuteronomy 28:1-14). We then discover we have "power" to forsake the descriptions given in 2 Timothy 2 and 3. We don't have to rely upon "a form of godliness," because we have Biblical power through a separated lifestyle unto God. The word "power" here is "dunamis," meaning "natural capability, inherent power; capability of anything, ability to perform anything; then, absolutely, not merely power capable of action, but, power in action" (Bullinger's). This "dunamis" is the same power of Acts 1:8 and has to do with the infilling of God's Holy Spirit in our lives, to make us active for God, and to enable us to live separated lives unto God! There is power in living a separated lifestyle unto God and His glory!

The Scripture is clear when it says, "*For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power* (thesame word "dunamis" as in 2 Timothy 3:5)" (1 Corinthians 4:20). In the previous verse, the Apostle Paul said to the people, "*I want to know your power, not your words.*" But what do we see again and again, today, in the name of Christianity? Words, words, words! And educated words at that! But what has it produced (generally speaking) in the Kingdom of God? A weak, powerless generation of cautious and passive "Christian believers," who still live in bondage, yet, at the same time, are arrogant with it. Blame shifters! "It's not my fault! It's my parents, the devil, the church, I was born that way" - and so it goes on. The result is always "powerlessness"! We need to seriously ask

ourselves: "Is there true spiritual power in my life?" And, "If not, then why not?" What are we going to do about it?

Did Jesus come into this world to pay the supreme sacrifice, and price of redemption for mankind, merely for it to be demonstrated in a powerless "form of godliness"? Of course not! There's much more to it than that. He came to live inside of us! He came to take over! And when Jesus lives within us – and is Lord - we certainly do not portray the traits of our Scripture references of the 75% fruitless hearers! "A form of godliness" allows a lifestyle that falls below the accepted standard of what the cross of Jesus Christ is all about. It is a deceptive "band-aid" that does not deliver what the people are led to believe!

FROM SUCH TURN AWAY:

The Bible is clear in its instructions. If the lives of those proclaiming their "form of godliness" do not have a corresponding lifestyle that is separated unto God (the God of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit of Truth), then we are told to "turn away" from them. Do not allow them to influence you (because they will if we are not careful). That's why determining our friendships is important. There is a thing called "power of influence" that affects us – either positively or negatively. We become like the environment we live in, and the people we mix with. If you want to lift your standards in life, get input and friendly with those who are setting a higher example. They will inspire you to rise above yourself. In the same way, if you allow negative people to influence you, they will pull you down to a lower level. So, you have to ask yourself very seriously, "Do I want to live my life with 'a form of godliness,' or with the true godliness as portrayed in the Bible"? If you want the second, then you have to associate with those who set that standard. The Bible clearly tells us to "turn away" from the others, for, if we don't, they will cause us to become like them, justifying ourselves and then trying

to cover it over with "a form of godliness." And that, my friend, is deception.

Again, let's ask ourselves another question: "Who has the most influence on my life?" If that influence is not good, what are you going to do about it? Don't expect God to do something about it. He told us to "turn away from such." The next decision is yours!

"A form of godliness" does not bring eternal answers. It does not change lives; it only causes people to accept their lot as being from God. That is exactly what the devil wants us to believe, "that we're born like that and we have to live with it" "to the glory of God" (of course! Let's blame God!).

As we get closer to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are going to see the gap between the godly and those with "a form of godliness" get further and further apart. The life of Biblical godliness will be rejected more and more as "*evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived*" (become more religiously deceived) (2 Timothy 3:13). If you recognize that you are allowing those with "a form of godliness" to influence your life negatively, then the Bible instructs you: "*from such turn away.*" It is something you have to do. It is not God's will for you to be dragged down by others who do not have the right godly standards. Recognize what is happening, and make decisions that will bring you closer to Jesus, give you more power, and a freedom to live your life "to the glory of God". Amen.

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The perils of poor punctuation

A panda goes into a bar, orders a sandwich, fires a gun and heads for the door. A shaken barman asks why. 'Look it up,' says the panda, throwing him a badly punctuated wildlife manual. The barman turns to the relevant page: 'Panda: Bear-like mammal native to China. Eats, shoots and leaves.'



An Alsatian went into a telegram office, took a blank form, and wrote: "Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof". The clerk politely told the dog: "There are only nine words here. You could send another woof for the same price". "But", the dog replied, "that would make no sense at all".

Thoughtful Quotes

When you seek God's face you do not stop until you get into God's Presence - even if it takes all night. There is a lot of praying that is not seeking God's face - it stops short of contact with God. - Derek Prince

We are the decisive factor in the affairs of the universe. - Derek Prince

A faith that does not result in activity of any kind is a dead faith; it is empty, worthless, insincere. - Derek Prince

We cannot just lock up the presence, glory and gifts of God in Worship-services and hope that the people come in!

The journey makes things valuable not the title. Learn to enjoy and value the process of what God is doing.

Darkness is completely inferior to light. Most of the church has too big of a devil.

You didn't have a good day till you confronted the impossibilities of life and saw them yield and bow to the name of Jesus. Bill Johnson.

The great majority of the Christian world is still weeping at the foot of the cross. The consciousness of man is fixed on the Christ Who died, not the Christ Who LIVES. They are looking back to the Redeemer Who was, not the redeemer who IS.

Men have said that the cross of Christ was not a heroic thing, but I want to tell you that the cross of Jesus Christ has put more heroism in the souls of men than any other event in human history.

Men have mystified and philosophized the Gospel of Jesus but it is as simple as it can be. The secret of Christianity is in being. It is in being a possessor of the nature of Jesus Christ. John G Lake.

Barnabas Bulletin~ 0127

CONNECTING WITH THE VOICE OF GOD

In 1 Samuel Chapter 3 we have the account of how the young child (Samuel) first heard and then connected to the voice of God. When the voice of God first came to Samuel he believed it was the voice of Eli the priest. Samuel was in his warm bed when the voice came. That voice was loud enough, and clear enough, to cause him to rise out of his bed, walk through the cold temple corridors to where Eli was asleep. He

woke Eli up and asked him what he wanted. Eli did not recognize that God was speaking and revealing Himself to Samuel; rather he thought Samuel was mistaken and sent him back to bed. The voice came again the second time, and again Samuel responded to it, got up and went to wake Eli. Samuel met with the same response from Eli. It happened again the third time, and by the third time Eli discerned that God was trying to speak to the boy. Eli should have recognized that the first time, as his responsibility was to teach Samuel the ways of the Lord. Eli held the spiritual position and title, but he did not have the discernment to recognize what was happening; it seems he had not learned to connect with the voice of God for his own life as there appears to be no record of him hearing directly from God for himself? There is record of a prophet coming to him with words of judgment ([1 Samuel 2:27-36](#)), and the word of the Lord came to him through Samuel after Samuel had connected the voice he heard as being that of God.

On Samuel's third visit Eli perceived that God was trying to speak to him, so he instructed him as to how to respond to the voice if it came again. Back in bed again, the voice came the fourth time and Samuel asked God to speak to him. God did, and in that instant Samuel connected the voice as being the voice of God (and not that of a man, or his own imaginations), and stepped into a whole new realm of spirituality that was to raise him up as a Prophet to the nation of Israel. Because of Samuel's commitment and dedication to God ~ and his placing a total value on the words of the Lord, the Bible says ***"He did let none of His Words fall to the ground"*** ([1 Samuel 3:19](#)). Samuel learned to value the voice and words of the Lord more than anything else. He guarded those words above every other thing.

We might ask ourselves why Samuel went three times to Eli when he was rebuffed the first time? Samuel had a servant heart, and a servant heart always responds to the voice of his/her master. It was that servant heart that enabled God to trust Samuel with words of revelation about what He wanted to do in the land. A servant heart is a responsive heart. It does not make excuses and say, *"I can't return to Eli because he will only rebuff me again."* He genuinely believed the voice was that of Eli and so responded accordingly ~ at that point in time he did not know the voice of God to be able to recognize it! He was there to serve and learn from Eli, and so it was to him he went.

Once Samuel knew the voice of God it became his first priority to listen, guard and keep that word at the forefront of his life. He so connected with the voice of God in such an accurate way that it was later said of Samuel: **“All that he says surely comes to pass”** ([1 Samuel 9:6](#)) What a testimony to have! People knew they could rely on the words of Samuel as being from God. How the Christian Church today needs such humble-hearted, servant-hearted men and women who will be connected to the voice of God ~ which is the voice of truth ~ and be able to communicate that truth to this generation. Unfortunately many Christians doubt the voice of God when it comes to them. The reality is that God is speaking to His people today, but are we hearing Him? Are we proving that the voice we hear is the voice of God? Jesus said: **“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me”** ([John 10:27](#)). Knowing the voice of God in our personal lives is the Number One priority for a Christian. We need to know Him personally enough to know when He is speaking to us. His voice brings us into a wonderful relationship with the Lord of the whole earth; it leads and guides us into all truth; it teaches us the ways and will of God for our lives, and it enables us to be more fruitful in the Kingdom of God than any other way. In The GFM Ministry we have seen God faithfully provide for us month after month; He has enabled us to minister to thousands of people around the world in such a way that their lives are impacted by the Holy Spirit. It is the Lord’s doings, and it is marvelous in our eyes!

The voice of the Lord is vital to us. Have you heard Him speaking to you? Are you connected yet? None of us can afford not to be connected to the voice of God. Hear Him today! ~ **Rodney W. Francis.**

Readings: [1 Samuel 3](#); [1 Samuel 10](#); [John 10](#).

Please Pray This Prayer:

“Dear God, I come to You in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and I ask You to help me to be connected to Your voice. Help me to be humble enough to listen to You, and to be servant-hearted enough to respond to You and obey what You say to me. I really do want to do Your will, and to be an effective and fruitful minister of Your Supernatural Gospel in my day and generation. I desire to fulfil Your

vision for my life! Thank You, Lord. Please speak to me today. In Jesus' name, I pray these things. Amen."

Why did the chicken cross the road?

- **GEORGE W. BUSH**
We don't really care why the chicken crossed the road. We just want to know if the chicken is on our side of the road or not. The chicken is either with us or it is against us. There is no middle ground here.
- **COLIN POWELL**
Now at the left of the screen, you clearly see the satellite image of the chicken crossing the road.
- **HANS BLIX**
We have reason to believe there is a chicken, but we have not yet been allowed access to the other side of the road.
- **SADDAM HUSSEIN**
This was an unprovoked act of rebellion and we were quite justified in dropping 50 tons of nerve gas on it.
- **JACQUES CHIRAC**
We are chickens, and will veto any resolution that may force us to cross a road. It isn't safe.
- **DR. SEUSS**
Did the chicken cross the road?
Did he cross it with a toad?
Yes, The chicken crossed the road,
But why it crossed, I've not been told!
- **ERNEST HEMINGWAY**
To die. In the rain. Alone.

- MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
I envisage a world where all chickens will be free to cross roads without having their motives called into question.
- GRANDPA
In my day, we didn't ask why the chicken crossed the road. Someone told us that the chicken crossed the road, and that was good enough for us.
- JOHN LENNON
Imagine all the chickens crossing roads in peace.
- ARISTOTLE
It is the nature of chickens to cross the road.
- KARL MARX
It was an historical inevitability.
- VOLTAIRE
I may not agree with what the chicken did, but I will defend to the death its right to do it.
- RONALD REAGAN
What? chicken?
- CAPTAIN KIRK
To boldly go where no chicken has gone before.
- ALBERT EINSTEIN
Did the chicken really cross the road or did the road move beneath the chicken?
- BILL CLINTON
I did not cross the road with THAT chicken. What do you mean by chicken? Could you define chicken, please?
- COLONEL SANDERS
I missed one?



Before I started Jenny Craig diet



After one year.

The Editor



Paul Christensen

I first became a Christian in an Assembly Of God church in Lower Hutt, New Zealand, in 1966, under the ministry of Trevor Chandler. This was the first time I realized that I needed to make a definite, personal commitment to Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I guess I heard the voice of Christ in my heart then, but did not have the maturity to recognize it as such, but I obeyed it and that is the main thing.

About two years later, I felt the need to have a closer relationship with God as a person and set out to seek him more earnestly. One night, in the middle of a golf course, in desperation, I told Him that people had been able to introduce me to church, Bible Study, prayer, appropriate Christian living, etc., but no one had been able to introduce me directly to God. So, I said "I am Paul, and you are God, and I am very pleased to meet you."

Immediately, I felt as though I were lit up inside, and I heard Him say, "Paul, we have been waiting for this for a long time." It was a comforting, assuring voice that spoke deep in the back of my mind. This has continued from that time until this.

Although I have been involved with Anglican and Baptist churches during the last 20 years, I am now an Elder of St Aidan's Presbyterian Church in Conifer Grove in Auckland. I am also involved in The Gospel Faith Messenger ministry with its Prophetic Equipping Days and other outreaches, seeking to empower Christians to hear and recognize the Voice of God making His will clear to them. It is with this in mind that I trust that this booklet will be of assistance to you.

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Once you have read this, pass it on to someone else who might be encouraged by reading it.