

## WHEN GOD'S THOUGHTS PREVAIL

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The prophet Isaiah wrote, “ ‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts’ ” (Isaiah 55:8-9). Not only do men of our present generation think their thoughts are as good as God’s thoughts, but that situation has evidently existed since near the beginning. Such reasoning surely accounts for the fact that people have adopted countless innovations in religion that are in contradiction to instructions in God’s word.



Looking back at Naaman, a valiant soldier and commander of the Army of Syria, illustrates this idea. Naaman had leprosy, and his servant girl told him to go to a prophet in Samaria who could tell him how to be healed.

When Naaman went to the prophet Elisha, he didn’t even come out of his house but told Naaman to go to the River Jordan and wash seven times to be healed. Nathan became angry and responded, “*Indeed, I said to myself, ‘He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.’*” He continued to reason that the rivers of Damascus were better than all the waters of Israel and that he could wash in them and be cleansed of his leprosy. What Naaman had in mind was totally different from what Elisha told him to do. Naaman was persuaded to relent, and he was healed when he obeyed God’s command as delivered by the prophet (2 Kings 5:1-15).

Men cannot fully comprehend God’s wisdom as the Apostle Paul indicates in **Romans 11:33**: “*Oh, the depth of the riches*

*both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!*” Even so, we can know what God expects of us when we study the written word with an open, trusting mind (**Romans 10:17**).

On one occasion Jesus healed a man blind from birth by spitting on the ground and making clay out of it. Many would question this action. Was it a clean method of healing? If we use our human mind, it is foolishness—it is unsanitary. But Jesus anointed the eyes of that blind man and told him to go to wash in the pool of Siloam. When he obeyed, he was able to see. The point is that we don’t always understand the unsearchable wisdom of God; but if we obey what is revealed in His word, that will be enough to be pleasing to His sight.

Following God’s commandments is necessary in all aspects of our lives, including the observance of the Lord’s Supper. The Lord commanded that we remember His sufferings and death on the cross. He used one loaf of unleavened bread to symbolize His body. Jesus prayed for it and gave it to the apostles, telling each to break off a piece.

Jesus also took the cup containing the fruit of the vine, blessed it, and handed it to His disciples saying, “*Drink from it, all of you.*” The apostles obeyed the command, and they all drank from it (Matthew 26:26-27; Mark 14:22-23; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:23-25)

Even though the Lord left this example, many refuse to conduct the Lord’s Supper as commanded because they think it is unsanitary. We know, however, the Lord would never command us to do anything that would bring us harm. We use one cup because it is a command and it is an example set by our Savior: we do so in faith.

Paul gives perspective to the way we treat what has been commanded: “*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know*

Sundays at 6:30 AM



### February Topics

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The Second Coming

**2/23 Sermon #1236**

The Second Coming (part 2)

## FEBRUARY 2020 NEWSLETTER

*the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:12-13).*

Our wish is to please God. To do so, we must have the spirit of obedience, regardless of whether or not we agree with the command. We must trust Jesus and His words. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts and His ways than our ways.

### SHAKEN FAITH BECAUSE OF OTHERS

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One of the saddest things I have witnessed in my life is a person rejecting Jesus because of the behavior of other people. One of the strongest points taught in scripture is that God's children have the responsibility of living in such a way as to be a good example for others to follow. When we live in such a way that we discourage others in remaining faithful, we fail in this, one of the most elementary New Testament principles. And when our lives are so far off course that we shake the faith of others and cause them to leave the Lord, we stand guilty before Him.



Many scriptures, such as this one in Colossians, emphasize good Christian behavior that will serve as a good example for others to follow:

*Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one (Colossians 4:5-6).*

In this article, however, I want to speak to the person struggling with his or her faith because he has come into contact with a professing Christian whose actions have caused him to consider leaving the church.

Jesus warns every Christian about the consequences of not living in a way that pleases God:

*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to*

*Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'" (Matthew 7:21-23).*

The sad truth taught by this scripture is that even some people in the church will not make it to heaven because of their disregard of God's word, their actions toward God, and their treatment of other people. For example, in Revelation chapters two and three, many supposed followers of Jesus in those churches were in danger of missing heaven because of their behavior.

We understand that those added to the church have been forgiven of their sins; yet they must still be cautious and not follow a crowd to do evil, even if that crowd worships with them. Jesus says the majority of the people at the church of Sardis in Revelation 3 had defiled their garments, but there were a few among them who had not. This mix of people worshiped at the same congregation. Those in good standing did not follow the professing crowd but rather followed the scriptures. They did not judge Christianity based on the people there, though the people did play an important role in their lives; rather they based their faith on the scriptures, the recipe for success.

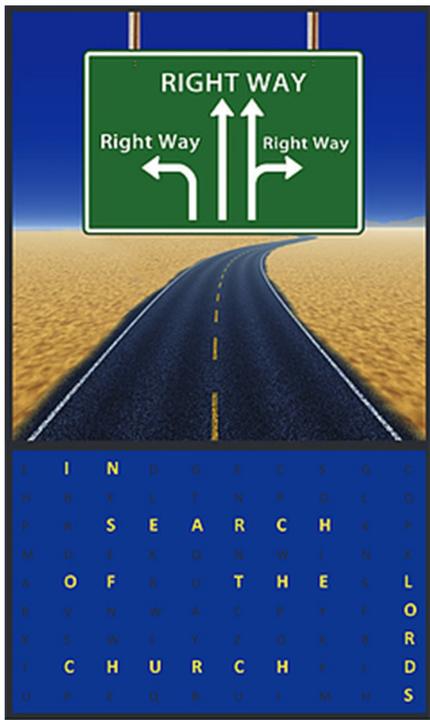
To illustrate this idea, imagine that I've been given a recipe to make a chocolate cake, but I use too much salt, oil, etc. After tasting it, a person may think this chocolate cake tastes awful. His conclusion is based upon the assumption that I didn't have the ability to prepare the cake. The reality is that I didn't follow the recipe as given. It would have been better to have judged the cake after it was prepared according to the recipe. If he didn't like it then, we could just say that he didn't like it; but at least he would have judged it based on the recipe and not on my ability to prepare it.

Those who are struggling should not give up their faith because some of their fellow Christians don't follow the recipe for Christianity correctly. Paul says, "follow me as I follow Christ." That's the kind of example we should have to follow. The focus should be on Christ and not on another person. Then, if a brother or sister is lost, it will not be because he or she had his faith shaken by a straying Christian. It will be that his own faith was not strong enough and that he didn't work hard enough to stay close to Jesus.

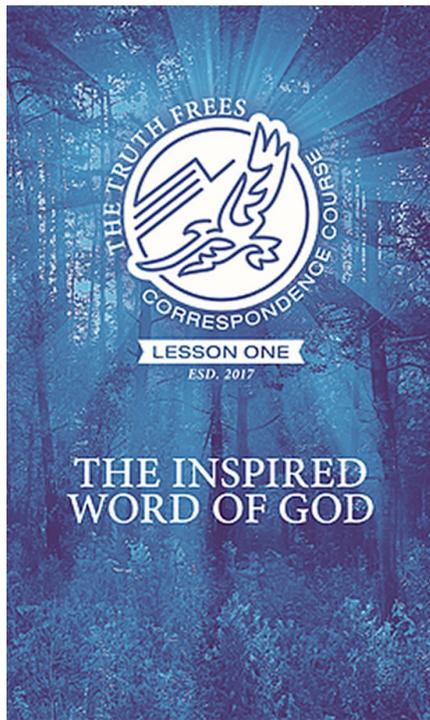


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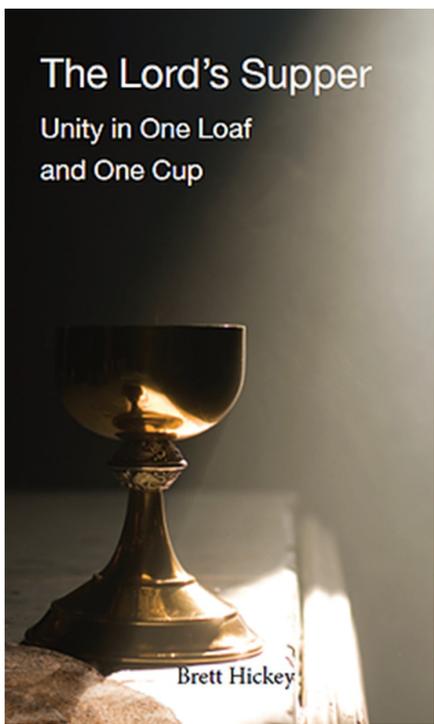
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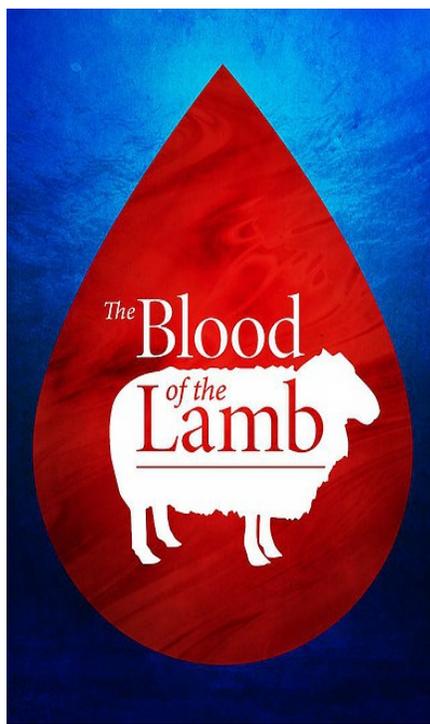
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