

Know the Word? #1

2012-08-25, John Fenn, www.supernaturalhousechurch.org

Hi all,

I don't think there has ever been a generation of Christians tossed to and fro by every wind of teaching by the sleight of men and cunning tricks, as this current generation. And there is a very good reason for this, which is what this series is about.

If you can imagine a belief based on something the Bible seems to state, it is out there: Do you think Jesus is returning by 12/21/12? Someone will show you a formula based on scripture to prove it. Do you think there is no accountability nor sin anymore? Someone will have scripture to prove it. Do you think women should be silent in all church services and/or wear no make up? There is a stream in the faith for that one too.

And how did we get in this condition? How can we be safe when we hear a teaching, and determine if it is God or man? Allow me to walk us through the corridors of time.

Back in the day

There was a time when the Seminary-trained clergyman was the lone man who had been taught the Word of God. You went to a specialized college to study medicine. You went to a specialized college to study law. You went to a specialized college, Seminary, to study God. Only the Pastor/Priest/Minister understood scripture because it was just too hard for the common man to understand. That was the culture.

As limiting as that structure was, the benefit was that across denominational lines, all Christendom was pretty much on the same core spiritual page. There were core beliefs based more or less on the Word that all Protestant denominations held as true, and they watched those idolatrous Roman Catholics with a wary eye, for all knew the worship of Mary and saints wasn't in scripture.

There goes the neighborhood!

A funny thing happened on the way to church one day, somewhere in the 1960's and '70's, the Charismatic Renewal broke out across denominational lines. People were getting baptized with the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues faster than denominations could adjust. Members of all denominations began meeting in homes for "prayer & praise" with anyone who was also baptized with the Holy Spirit - leave your church membership card at the door. Just break out the harpsichord and let's worship Jesus!

The Christian book store

Soon, publishers and musicians started marketing to these once content pew sitters who were 'ruined' by the baptism with the Holy Spirit and their prayer & praise meetings. Christian bookstores popped up with more translations of Bibles than I knew existed and numerous authors on all things God. Music ranging from folk rock/hippy culture Jesus people to hard rock, and even Christian posters by a company named 'Argus', jewelry, and t-shirts...Surely our nation was one step away from being fully Christian!

God's Word was no longer held captive by the Seminarians, it was now being given out to the common man. Curious about angels? You could find books from Billy Graham on the conservative side, to Charles & Francis Hunter on the wild side. Wanting to know about the Baptism with the Holy Spirit? You could read John Sherrill's 'They Speak With Other Tongues' or if Episcopalian, read Father Dennis Bennett's material.

Diluting the Word

Soon, everyone had at least one opinion on any topic called God because there were so many voices on the subject. People were leaving the study of the Word itself in favor of what people said about the Word.

Over a short time people went from just loving God for loving God's sake, to wanting something from Him - money, saved family, success, health - and formulas based on what people said God said arose.

Word of Faith

In the 1980's the Word of Faith movement arose with a core message of the integrity of God and His Word. That seemed to be God's answer to all the craziness of the 1970's, and brought many into balance and taught them how to compare x teaching against the whole counsel of the Word.

By the 1990's disciples of the Word of Faith turned the Word into a means of getting money, and the prosperity movement began full of its own formulas. The subtle concept 'If I do x then God will do x' took over and has flowed to different streams in the faith to this day.

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The Church Without Walls International
"THE WORD & THE SPIRIT IN BALANCE"

Now people fill conventions yelling and screaming at God trying to get Him to send down revival, as if we want people saved more than the One who sent His Son to take away the sin of the world wants them saved, making God our adversary in their minds.

Along the way world culture became one of sound bites, short blasts of sight and sound that told people what they should think, rather than encouraging them to think for themselves. That played well to the church, and Christians left common sense and self-respect at the door, allowing themselves to be manipulated to do things in the name of God no one in their right mind would do. You don't have to think anymore, the pastor will do that for you! It's all in the formula. In the Bible they sought God, today we seek formulas. Sad.

The Internet

Now all these voices find an outlet on the Internet, with even more people believing those sound bites are what the Word says, yet in reality is merely what someone said the Word says. For all our freedom and knowledge, human nature remains lazy, wanting Moses to talk to God for us and tell us what He said, rather than us investing ourselves in knowing Him up close and personal.

A new generation

There is a people hungry to know the Lord merely for the sake of knowing Him, no strings attached, nothing wanted of Him, just to know Him. They've been in meetings where they've recognized manipulation of the congregation, have seen the hypocrisy, have tried the formulas, and been left empty. They want Him!

Spiritual truth

The fact is, spirit-beings can talk. Not Koko the gorilla sign language, but spontaneous speech. Only spirits can do that - God, angels, people. That means the primary way of knowing a spirit-being is by speech.

Hebrews 1:1-3 states the Father spoke in many ways in different times to the fathers by the prophets but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, by whom He appointed heir of all things and by whom He made the universe. This Word of the Father is the brightness of the Father's glory, the impressed image of His character, and upholds all things by the Word of the Father's power.

Along with His appearance in the gospels, the Word of the Father has been appearing to mankind since walking in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. Our Bible is the collection of writings through the centuries tracing His appearances and involvement in man's life, as Peter tells us written by men for us 'as they were moved by the Holy Spirit'. (II Peter 1:21) These writings are today's Bible.

You know people by their word

The only way I knew my grandfather was by his words and being in his presence. He was an eye, ear, nose, and throat doctor and I loved being around him. He would take me on his Sunday hospital rounds when I was just a boy. We'd walk into someone's hospital room to be greeted warmly, he'd give the patient an exam, talk a bit, then move on. He would talk to me about medical things, about patients and their families, why they had that condition, and important grandfather-grandson things. I knew him by his word, and I knew him by being in his presence.

The Father is the same way. We must know Him by written Word and by knowing Jesus, and by being in His presence. Our Father lives in us, there to talk to, feel His presence inside, and able to commune with as fast as the speed of thought.

People ask me why I am so privileged to have Jesus appear to me to teach me or give prophetic words. First, it is grace. Second, the way to Jesus' heart is to love the Father first and foremost, which I do.

But if you lay those aside, I am 'safe' for them to appear to me or tell me things because I am grounded in the Word and Spirit. They know I won't get off balance or get kooky on them. I'm safe. Look around - there are many, many who have spiritual experiences out there, and usually that is their single event because they get goofy, proving the Father can't trust them with more. They filter their experience through religion or culture or add to it rather than just reporting what happened. I'm safe because I know the Word and Spirit and am not trying to make a name for myself...that's frank talk, but honest.

This is what I want to share with you in this series, so the Father and Lord can trust you with more and greater revelation and knowing the things of the Spirit - to know His ways. Learn how to ignore other voices, and only hear the Shepherd's voice. Stay tuned folks, this could change your life!
blessings,
John Fenn



Know the Word? # 2

2012-09-01, John Fenn, www.supernaturalhousechurch.org

Hi all,

Water balloon fight

It was a hot summer day in Kokomo, Indiana and we neighborhood kids were having a water fight. The new innovation back then was the 'water balloon'. Far better than a garden hose which had to remain connected to the faucet, a water balloon could be transported anywhere the attacker wanted.

The Fenn house was always ground zero for neighborhood activity, but across the road and down 2 houses was the Spencer family and their 2 girls. Next to the Spencer house were their cousins, the Spencers, who had 2 boys. That particular day the 4 Spencers attacked the 3 Fenn boys with water balloons in our own yard! The challenge had to be met!

I wanted to make a statement, filling the largest balloon with as much water as it would hold. I could barely tie the knot as I half ran and half waddled to the Spencer yard.

I had seen Stacey Spencer run around the corner of her house, where their garden hose was attached to the spigot, so it was immediately clear to me that as I turned the corner of her house she was going to spray me in a surprise attack. My timing had to be perfect - I had to let the balloon fly just as I rounded the corner in order to soak her before she could react to squeeze the handle on the hose.

My timing was perfect: The water balloon was just leaving my hands as I rounded the corner, but instead of Stacey standing there, it was her mother, Jo, innocently going outside to check her garden! It was too late. The big balloon hit her nose, chin, and top of her chest in an explosion of water, drenching her face to waist.

Stacey stood at the door of her house behind her mother wide eyed and uttering an audible gasp. I froze in horror. It was then the air was split with a scream by Stacey's mom: "OH YOU Johnny Fenn what are you doing?! You come right here young man we are taking this to your mother!"

The whole counsel

Jo was short and heavy, but strong, and at this stage of growth I was already at least as tall as she was. She had a grip on my right arm a bull dog would have been proud of as we marched to my house.

There we stood, short little fat Jo, drenched head to waist, me at age 10 with downcast eyes, and my mom holding back her laugh as Jo rambled on at 110 decibels about how I attacked her.

My mom knew me. She immediately knew I had not maliciously nor purposely attacked Jo, and once Jo calmed down she realized it too. The reason is that they both knew me. I was a kid of my word and would never, ever, be disrespectful to my elders - and certainly never attack an adult with a water balloon.

I apologized soberly, but once the door was closed my mom and I had a good laugh and that was that. Three factors were involved: They knew my character, they knew my life (actions), and they knew me by my words. They looked at this one instance in time and measured it against the whole of my 10 years alive on planet earth. I had never disrespected my elders, had never lied, had never beaten anyone up - this single incident was such an exception to what they knew of me, it was clear it the whole thing was an accident.

Know the character

What my mother and Mrs. Spencer looked at was '**the whole counsel**' of my life and words and actions, and that is why they instantly knew I had not purposely singled her out for a water balloon attack.

If we understand natural things like this, why is it we don't treat the Father and Lord Jesus the same way? Why do people pull a single scripture out of the Bible and say 'that's what God says' rather than look at His whole counsel as seen in the entirety of His life, words, and character?

Plead the blood?

Here is an example. Popularized by Kathryn Kuhlman in the 1960's and 70's and carried on in the charismatic movement of the 80's and 90's until it has become entrenched as gospel in some circles, is the practice of 'pleading the blood' when confronting demons. But is it what Jesus and the apostles taught and practiced? Does that belief stand against the 'whole counsel of God'?



What Jesus said and did

"And there was in the synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out...And Jesus rebuked him by saying; 'Be quiet and come out of him.'" Mark 1:23-25

"You deaf and dumb spirit, come out of him and enter him no more." Mark 9:25

"And they brought to Him a man unable to talk, who had a demon. And when the demon was cast out the man spoke." Matthew 9:32-33

"And when He had called to Himself the 12 disciples He gave them authority over unclean spirits to cast them out." "And they returned with joy saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us through your name!'" Luke 9:1; 10:17

"And these signs will follow those who believe in my name; they will cast out demons..." Mark 16:16-17

"But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit; 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!'" Acts 16:18

So there you have it - that's the Word. Simply command the spirit to leave in the name of Jesus. Space doesn't allow me to list all the gospel passages, but they consistently say the same thing, that we are to just speak to demons and command them to leave. Period.

The purpose for the blood of Jesus, what the Word says

"Whom God put forward before the eyes of all as a mercy seat and (appeasing) by His blood, the life giving and cleansing sacrifice of atonement and reconciliation..." Romans 3:25

"Since we are justified by Christ's blood..." Romans 5:9

"He took the cup and said, 'This cup is the New Covenant ratified and established with my blood.'" I Corinthians 11:25

"In whom we have redemption through His blood..." Colossians 1:14

"He went...into the Holy of Holies of heaven...by His own blood, having secured a complete redemption for us..." Hebrews 9:25

"You were purchased with the precious blood of Christ..." I Peter 1:19

What the error says

The error that has been exalted above what the Word of God says, is that we may appropriate the precious and holy blood of Jesus which was poured out for us 2,000 years ago on the cross to pay for sin, to now (merely) ward off demons. As you can see above, the blood of Jesus had 1 use - to pay for our sin.

We may be 'covered' by the blood of Jesus, for we are born again, that much is true. But everywhere in scripture the blood of Jesus is elevated as holy and sacred and revered as the payment for sin. No where in the scripture does it teach nor do we see Christians appropriating that blood to fight demons.

Now you have a choice to make if you have believed 'pleading the blood' is a scriptural way of dealing with demons. You must think. You must weigh what Jesus taught about casting out demons by commanding them in His name, how He trained the disciples, how they followed His instructions to get rid of demonic attack, and add in the whole of God's counsel on what the blood of Sacrifice was for in chapter and verse, against what you have believed. Do you dig in your heels or do you adjust what you believe to the Word?

Talking straight, blunt, fact, not to hurt feelings

Consider - many write me asking why they don't have wonderful spiritual experiences, why doesn't God open their eyes to see demons and angels. I don't have all the answers, but consider this:

Have you ever had a teenager or friend who believes differently about life or an event, and you try to talk to them about the reality of what happened but are limited in what you can share because they stick to their version of events? What you can share with them is limited. The same with Jesus and us if we stick to believing something that isn't what He said or did or taught, He must withhold revelation and information because we hang on to our version rather than the truth.



If Jesus appeared to you and talked to you about the angelic and demonic realm, could you understand what He was saying, because what He would teach you would be what He taught in the gospels and practiced there. Could He trust you, or do you have so many layers of erroneous understanding you either wouldn't understand the pure Word or you'd filter it through that error in your thinking and mess up the visitation?

Today's points: The whole counsel of God and the Word over anyone else. Know His character, His actions, His Word. Be willing to change what you believe if it isn't chapter and verse.

Hope I didn't burst too many water balloons on people, but if you know me, you'll know it wasn't done maliciously, for the whole of my life, teachings, and practice will bear this out. Next week more nitty gritty teaching on how you may be entrusted of the Lord with greater revelation, blessings,
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Know the Word? # 3

2012-09-08, John Fenn, www.supernaturalhousechurch.org

Hi all,

Last week I shared about knowing the 'whole counsel of God' by knowing His **character**, and **actions** recorded in His **Word**. Today I'll share 'context'.

Threw stones behind our back

When Barb and I first moved to the Boulder, Colorado area in May of 1980, we joined a church and got to know the pastor and his wife. To this day over 30 years later, we could pick up with them where we left off as friends, though we haven't seen each other since 1992. That's important for the story I'm about to tell.

We became friends with a couple who were leaders in the church, and they often hosted a lunch after Sunday morning service that was legendary. They were potlucks, but the wife, I'll call her 'E', always made delicious Mexican food of such quality and abundance that no matter what everyone else made, we all gravitated to whatever E had made.

As the 10-15 of us talked the conversation would inevitably drift towards church. Being Christians, it's almost mandatory that everyone have an opinion about everything in church, ranging from the sermons to what the pastor's wife was wearing to how dirty the bathrooms were Sunday - and everything in between.

Nothing said was critical, malicious, or in any way improper, just talking about how to make church better, or expressing thoughts over a meal as friends are prone to do.

And then one day...

We learned somehow we had fallen out of favor with the pastor and his wife, but were at first clueless. When we pressed an informant for information, the trail led directly back to E and talk during the Sunday afternoon potlucks. She had developed an attitude towards the pastor and his wife, but rather than go to them directly as scripture says, she pulled others into her criticism, including saying "John and Barb said".

We were horrified, and immediately called the pastor and his wife and asked to come over. We apologized profusely, humbly, sincerely, for we were horrified what E had told them. But when the pastor and his wife asked 'Did you say _____?' we had to admit, 'Yes' to all charges - we did say all that E had reported.

But everything E had reported to them was taken out of context. Yes, the bathrooms were a mess, we said that, but that was sandwiched within talk of a plan to become involved in the bathroom cleaning rotation, and adding decorations to make the women's bathroom more home-like, and so on.

It wasn't criticism, which the pastor immediately saw in each and every claim, and our name was cleared - but it was a very humbling lesson. It ended our attendance at the Sunday potlucks, but we repaired the relationship with the pastor and his wife. And they learned E was the actual source of the sudden rise of strife in the church.

Again, a question of character

One of the comments the pastor made to us that afternoon was this; "Well, it didn't sound like you...these things she reported to us seemed out of character." Because they did know our character, it made it much easier to set the record straight and allowed them to see the real source of strife. E had just stood behind us (and others) to lob stones of



accusation at the pastor and his wife, but we never let that happen again.

Jesus and context

One of the biggest things that people fall into is believing teaching that is taken out of context and turned into something that is far different from what Jesus said or the epistles teach. When that happens the 3 elements from last week are lost: Know the 'whole counsel of God' by staying with **Character, Action, and Word**.

Is what x teacher says consistent with the character of Jesus? Years ago some people were barking and crawling on the floor, supposedly under the influence of the Holy Spirit - really? Could you see Jesus barking like a dog or making anyone bark like a dog? No, of course not, so we dismiss the claim it is God.

Action - is that behavior found in the gospels or Acts, or described in the epistles? Word - can you find chapter and verse, and not just one, but 2 or 3 at least which say the same thing, and that thing is then consistent with the Lord's recorded actions and character? Did Peter every bark by the Holy Spirit? No!

All 3 elements must agree to be the whole counsel of God: The character of God, the recorded actions of God, and the Word of God.

An example

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, haven't we prophesied in your name? And in your name cast out many demons? And in your name done many wonderful things?' And then I will admit (confess) to them, 'I never knew you: Depart from me you who work iniquity.'" Matthew 7:21-23

This verse has been used to scare the living daylights out of Christians for years, who live in constant fear of their heavenly Father lest they do something that would get them kicked out of heaven.

And pulled out of context, that verse does sound like even Christians who love the Lord and living upright lives should fear the fires of hell. But let us put it in context and use our 3 guidelines to gain a clearer understanding.

Who is he talking about?

The preceding verses determine the context: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are hungry wolves. You will know them by the fruit of their lives. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. A healthy tree can't produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn't bring good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire, therefore by their fruit you will know them....Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord' will enter into the kingdom of heaven...they will say haven't we done great things in your name...but I will admit that I never knew them..." Matthew 7:15-23

Let me ask you a question: If Jesus told you something, anything, would whatever He told you be the truth? Of course, but allow this foolishness. If Jesus told you anything at all, wouldn't be the truth?

So if He told people, "I admit to you, I never knew you, leave me you who work iniquity", wouldn't that be the truth? I mean, He isn't saying He once knew them but no longer do - I never knew you - that is the truth, right?

So when people - in context false Christians - claim to have prophesied, cast out demons, and done great things in Jesus' name, and Jesus says 'I never knew you', who are you going to believe? Jesus, or them?

Now re-read that passage starting back in verse 15 that starts out "Beware of false prophets" and ends with "I never knew you" and you'll see that you dear Christian, have nothing to fear.

Jesus isn't talking about Christians, He is talking about false prophets, false Christians, non-born again people who work in the church, in Jesus' name laying claim to great things they have done for God, yet on that last day Jesus will be forced to admit to them, 'I never knew you, now leave me you workers of sin'.

(Look at the following verses talking about 2 houses, one built on sand (false prophets/false believers) and one built on the rock (Rock/Jesus) - it says the same thing as above, the false house false, the real survives)

The 3 guidelines

Besides context, we must ask these questions: Would throwing Christians out of heaven be **consistent with the character of Jesus** as seen in the gospels? Is there any example of Him telling any true believer they were destined for hell? The answer is no. Is there anything in Acts or the epistles saying genuine believers and disciples of Jesus

might yet miss heaven? The answer is no.

Action - do we see any action taken in the gospels or Acts to suggest Jesus or the apostles telling true disciples who are walking as best as they can with the Lord, that they are going to hell? No.

Word - Can we find chapter and verse in the New Testament that says true disciples of Jesus might still go to hell? The answer is no.

Therefore, based on context, the character of Jesus, the actions of Jesus, and the Word, we can determine that when Jesus said 'Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter into heaven', He was in fact talking about false believers, not true Christians.

In the same way my pastor back in 1980 had doubts about things Barb and I supposedly said because he knew the quality of our character, so too ask yourself; Does that sound like the Jesus I know, who I see in the gospels? If the answer is no, dig into context, look for similar actions in the gospels, and try to find 2 or 3 other verses that support that claim - if any one of them is inconsistent, disregard what the teacher says.

Next week - culture in context
Blessings,
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Know the Word? # 4

2012-09-15, John Fenn, www.supernaturalhousechurch.org

Hi all,

I've been talking about how to know if a teaching is true or false based on 'the whole counsel of God', found in these 3 areas: Is it consistent with **the character of Jesus**? Is it consistent with **Jesus' actions/life**? Is it found in **2-3 places in the Word**? And the 4th area introduced last week; **Is the verse in context** with preceding and following verses. Today; **Understanding the Culture**.

Understanding the culture

Some islands of the Caribbean have the reputation of being unfriendly to tourists. This conclusion is drawn because when people on cruising boats visit the islands, often the residents just stare and don't say a word. This has led to some people thinking the residents either don't like white people, or don't like them because they are tourists, or because they have money while many of the residents don't. Some tourists say they feel threatened by the stares and silence.

But in the book *Caribbean Hiking* by O'Keefe he explains that locals like to be spoken to first, expecting visitors to initiate greetings and conversations. One cruising couple decided to put it to the test, and upon setting foot on a long pier saw a group of locals 200 feet away (61 meters). They describe a motley assortment of dreadlock wearing men, fishermen and taxi drivers, all staring intently at them as they walked down the pier.

Taking a chance when they were just 20 feet away (6 meters) they smiled and called out "Good morning everybody!" The reaction was immediate: "Morning! Morning!" "Yah, mon!", "Good day to you!" with each person smiling widely as they offered their greetings.

The reputation is undeserved among tourists, it is a misunderstanding of the local culture. But if a misunderstanding gets repeated enough, it becomes fact in the minds of many; it becomes 'truth'.

2,000 years later...turn the other cheek?

One of the least understood passages and therefore incorrectly taught is from the Sermon on the Mount, and the misunderstanding is because of not knowing the culture. (Matthew 5:33-48)

"You have heard it said, 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'; but I say to you that you don't resist evil, but whoever hits you on the right cheek, offer the other as well. And if anyone sues you in court and takes away your jacket, offer to him your heavy coat as well. And whoever compels you to go 1 mile, go with him 2..."

From not understanding the Word nor culture, pastors have taught their congregations to become spineless door mats, suffering all sorts of evil at the hands of everything from dishonest 'Christian' businesspeople to telling their children not to stand up for themselves in school, to continuing in abusive marriages, and more.



The subject is restitution

In Exodus 21:18-36 we have laws of restitution concerning acts of violence. Picking up in v22: "If men are fighting and a by-stander like a pregnant woman is injured and has a miscarriage as a result, yet no violence or rape was intended, the man causing the miscarriage will be punished and pay a fine as the woman's husband and the judges determine. But if any other harm or rape follows, her attacker will give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth..."

The passage clearly shows first, a baby in the womb is life, and second, the phrase 'eye for eye and tooth for tooth' is about restitution and making up for injury caused. The attacker must pay restitution for the damage caused, eye for eye, tooth for tooth.

This limits what is known as 'punitive damages' by saying 'eye for eye' rather than 'you hurt my eye you have to pay for my injury the rest of your life'. Other passages similarly limit the amount a thief has to restore, including in Leviticus 6:1-6 the restoration of the principle, plus 20% interest, and an offering to the Lord.

Saved from being mauled

The Bible interprets the Bible, so we looked at the Word in Exodus, which shows 'an eye for an eye' was restitution, not revenge. For instance, when our youngest son, Brian was about 9, he saw a vicious dog about to attack a little 4 year old girl who had wandered into the chained up dog's yard and within range of his length of chain.

He got between the dog and the girl taking her out of range, saving her from a horrible mauling or death, but suffered bites from the dog in the process. The trip to the emergency room was over \$300, and we sought restitution from the neighbors - tooth for tooth, bite for bite - so to speak. (They refused saying it was the girl's fault)

Back in Matthew 5 Jesus continues: "But I say to you, don't resist evil, for whoever hits you on the right cheek, offer the left, and whoever sues you in court and takes away your jacket, offer your heavy coat..."

To slap you makes me feel good

In courts of the day, a common judgment for misdemeanors was a slap on the right cheek and a small fine against the defendant. As most people were right-handed, a slap on the defendant's right cheek made the blow less powerful. Jesus is making his point to His disciples about being so ready to offer restitution, so ready to make things right, that you offer the other cheek if that will satisfy the person who has won a judgement against you.

He continues by saying if you are in court and the judgment goes against you and you are required to give the plaintiff your jacket, go over and above what is required and give your heavy coat too.

The extra mile

"And whoever compels you to go 1 mile, go with him 2". This custom started with the Persian Empire and continued by the Greeks and then Romans. The law stated that any messenger from the king had the right to use (ride) any camel, donkey or horse for a distance equivalent to about 1 mile (1.6km), and the owner of the animal had the right to accompany the messenger that he might retrieve his animal when the messenger changed mounts. Jesus said to go the extra mile, just to be sure the messenger was well served and everything was right between you and the messenger. (I cover these in my *Sermon on the Mount II* series)

Poor pastor

If a person doesn't research the **Word** that Jesus' ministry was based on, and doesn't check into the **culture** of the day, and doesn't stay in **context**, and doesn't measure what a passage appears to say against the whole of **Jesus's life and character**, they come away with a teaching that Christians are to be door mats for others to take advantage of and abuse. That clearly is NOT what Jesus is teaching.

You are so eager to make things right you offer 1 extra slap, but after that the person has to deal with their own heart, for you've done your part. If a judgment against you commands you give up your favorite jacket, be so eager to make it right you give your favorite coat too - but not your whole wardrobe. They will have to deal with their own heart for you've done all you can do on your part to be at peace with them.

If you go an extra mile for a person, turn back taking your animal with you, for they will have to get their own beast of burden from there on out, having to deal with their own lack of planning or laziness on their own - you've done over and above what the Lord commands - the rest is up to them.

And the context confirms the right understanding for Jesus continues: "Give to him who asks of you, and if someone wants to borrow something, don't turn them away. You have heard it said you should love your neighbor but hate your enemy, but I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who use you and persecute



you (see above examples) that you might be like your Father in heaven, for He makes the sun and rain to shine and fall on the just and unjust alike without discrimination or bias...."

Clearly the context is about Christian character and doing all we can to make things right, to be at peace with others, to love all equally without discrimination or bias, while placing limits on just how much we are to give in our efforts to make peace with them. Jesus is saying do what you can do, but after that they have to stand on their own two feet - don't be an enabler. That is Christian love.

And this leads to...

Once you understand The Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus lays out His core message, then other passages fall into place, like how many pastors say we are to shun and avoid former church members who have left. They cite Matthew 18:15-20 where Jesus says to treat a brother who refuses to make peace as 'a heathen and publican.'

Many pastors have told congregations to scorn and avoid former members of their church, saying this is what Jesus said to do. But when you see what Jesus said a few chapters earlier about walking in love, (**Word**), and understand the **character of Jesus** (the Shepherd going after the lone lost sheep), and put it in **context and culture**, you see the way we are to treat the publican and sinner is to love him - to treat him as our Father does, who causes the sun and rain to fall on just and unjust alike without bias or discrimination.

This proper understanding is verified because in the next verses Jesus says those original 2 or 3 men who went to the man to try to make peace, are now gathered in Jesus' name praying for him, and the Lord says He is in the midst of those 2-3 who are agreeing for this man's restoration and soul!

Isn't that understanding consistent with the life of Jesus, consistent with the whole of the gospels, consistent with culture, context and the rest of the Word? That's how you find the whole counsel of God as it relates to a teaching....next week, how to determine His counsel when it isn't in chapter and verse...

blessings,
John Fenn

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Know the Word? # 5

2012-09-22, John Fenn, www.supernaturalhousechurch.org

Hi all,

Know the Word?

I've been sharing these last 4 weeks how to determine if a teaching is the true and balanced Word of God. We determine if a teaching is 'the whole counsel of God' by asking these questions: Is it **consistent with the character of Jesus**? Is it **consistent with the life/actions of Jesus**? Can it be found elsewhere **2-3 times in the Word**? Is it understood in **context** and in the **culture** of the day?

But what about something not found in the Word?

What if someone comes to you and says "The Lord told me..." and it doesn't sound right but you can't disagree with them because they said 'God said', yet you know it doesn't make sense and isn't wise but they aren't open to your opinion - what do you do?

What if someone tells you God told them they can quit their job because He will take care of them? What if someone says God told them not to take their medicine anymore, but you can see no change to their condition and clearly they are risking their health and life? What if someone says God told them not to take their sick child to a doctor?

What if someone told you God said so and so is going to be their spouse? What if someone is believing God for healing while continuing to abuse their body which caused the condition in the first place, yet they won't change their diet or lifestyle - and 'God said' essentially, they don't have to, for He will heal them anyway?

The answer doesn't sound spiritual

Jesus said 'Wisdom is justified by her children'. This means a wise decision will later be revealed to have been wise by the (children/results) of the decision. Luke 7:35

That means if someone is about to make a decision based on 'God told me' but what they claim He said doesn't seem scriptural nor wise but you can't turn to chapter and verse to prove it, the answer is to let them walk out their claim. That is difficult if you love them, to watch them suffer, but there is no other solution.

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"THE WORD & THE SPIRIT IN BALANCE"

Letting them walk it out is taught by Paul: "Brothers and sisters, if anyone is overtaken in a trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, considering yourself as you also could have been tempted. In doing so you bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ."

"But if someone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Let each person examine his own life and actions, and then he will be able to rejoice within himself, for each shall bear his own load." Galatians 6:1-5

So we see two things at work here: In the first 2 verses it is about someone who sins and repents, and is surrounded by loving friends eager to renew their fellowship and friendship.

Next he talks about someone who won't repent, is set in their way, refusing to accept guidance from others. Let us examine what Paul says we should do for a person like that.

First, this person thinks more highly of himself than he should - 'thinks himself to be something when he is nothing'.

Second, is that they are self-deceived. In the Greek, this is 'phrenapatao', which means 'to deceive by fantasies', or as Vine's Dictionary of NT Words says, 'a sin against common sense'. James says this person is a hearer of the Word, but not a doer. My experience has been these people pick and choose which parts of the Word they will obey, and refuse to examine themselves in other areas.

Third, the verse says 'let each person examine his own work (life and actions). My experience has been that once a person thinks more highly of themselves than they should (pride), and become self-deceived, sinning against common sense by their fantasies, they lose desire to examine their lives and take responsibility for their actions.

One of the most common is the get-rich-quick mentality I've seen so many times through the years. Usually the person is either in debt and has been praying about a quick solution to get out of debt, or they want enough money to live on so they 'can do what I'm called to do' in the Lord. When a proposal comes to them, they invest money in it trusting the Lord has finally moved on their behalf.

It would take more than all my fingers and toes to count over 36+ years of walking with the Lord, of able-bodied men and women who have told me 'God told me to quit my job' or 'God told me I don't have to work anymore', and then after being brought to the edge of starvation, go back to work - without a hint of willingness to examine their life! No admittance they missed it, no teachability - they are still blaming the devil instead of looking in the mirror.

Fourth is that 'each shall bear his own load'. This is a word picture of a man carrying a load on his back - meaning if a person claims 'God told me', time will tell the tale. To him who is walking in wisdom and in balance, they will have rejoicing in themselves over what the Lord has done. To him who thinks he is something when he is nothing, he too has to walk that out and suffer the consequences.

When God actively resists His children

"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore submit to God, and then resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands (remove yourself from your prideful action) you sinners and purify your hearts you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up!" James 4:6-10

Pride - the only solution for pride listed in the Old and New Testaments is for the proud person to repent and humble themselves before God. If someone sins against you, you can ask the Father to forgive them and He will do it. But pride isn't something you can pray for a person to be delivered from, they must humble themselves and rid themselves of it.

You can pray they see their pride, you can pray the Father will deal with them about it, but you can't cast out their pride nor pray it away for them - only the proud can get rid of their pride, and the only solution presented in scripture is repentance.

The Father will actively resist a proud Christian. We don't want our Father actively resisting us. **Know this:** He will actively resist a person in a single area they are in pride and error, while in the rest of their lives be open and flowing. Many who don't realize this truth think that because He is blessing in one area of their life then the He must be OK with the rest of their life - but often that is not the case.

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We have only to look at our children to see a natural example of this. We may 'ground' a child, taking away privileges from them for a time, yet in the rest of their lives our relationship with them is normal - they are our children, only in this one area have we resisted them (their pride).

In short, if a person tells you 'God told me' and you don't believe it is God, then let them walk it out. Be supportive, see if they are open to instruction, and if not let them walk it out. As Paul said, God is not mocked, He will render to them what they deserve. And if they are self-deceived they are in pride, and only they can remedy their own situation.

When you find someone who has a track record of saying 'God told me' and their life is one of productivity, peace, stability, then their 'children' - the results of their decisions - are obvious to be God. If you find someone who has a track record of saying 'God told me' but then nothing works out, or God suddenly seems to change His mind, or they are drifting yet aren't open to truth - they must walk it out. Often His grace will try to reach their pride another way, letting them have their way (though a tough route) for a season, before bringing them back to the place of need and hopefully, repentance and change.

Next week - another subject. Until then, blessings,
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