

The 12 Questions

Spring Valley Church of Christ
148 West Maple Street
San Diego, California 92103

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Dear Brethren,

We have before us twelve (12) questions which brother Rury has asked that the church of Christ in Spring Valley answer for the church at Seminole. Before the church in Spring Valley could make a decision on this matter it was taken before all the members that they might have a voice in the decision. After due deliberation the judgment was made to answer the questions. At the same time it was resolved to send the answers to some of the members of the Seminole church. We might explain that not all the members of the Seminole church will receive copies of this letter because of the time, energy and expense entailed; but we are hopeful that those who are recipients of the enclosed material will share it with others. In this way all the church would have knowledge of this matter; which we believe is the business of the members of the church, and not for just a few.

As an explanation as to why these questions are being asked of the church in Spring Valley, we believe it is related in a vague way to the fact that at times we have asked to use the baptistery to baptize those who are aged and/or who may have an illness which might be aggravated by baptizing them in a swimming pool, which normally is used for this purpose, but which does not have a heater. We also think it is because one of the members of the church was asked to meet with some of the members at Seminole and refused to do so until he knew the reason for the meeting in advance. The questions which will follow are the result of the refusal to meet with a group from the Seminole church until the Spring Valley church knew the reason for such a meeting.

Before going into the answers to the questions we would like to make some remarks about the lack of unity amongst the churches in these perilous and trying times, both for the church and for the country in which we reside. We believe if the churches of Christ were all following the word of God they should sustain a close relationship with each other. At one time we had this unity, but this disappeared in the labyrinth of institutionalism, ignorance, covetousness, worldliness and materialism, which has taken the place of love, unity, knowledge and spirituality.

But while the great apostasy which in the last few years wrought havoc and destroyed the souls of thousands amongst the people of God, it did not have the effect of bringing the small segment of what is commonly known as the 'conservatives' into a closer unity and a more complete uniformity in teaching or practice. It would seem that each church ought to feel itself in sympathy with every other conservative body; as sisters in the great family of God; and act as to respect the interests, the rights, and the feelings of others. But instead there is an independence amongst the conservatives which dissolves rather than builds unity. A church which disregards this fraternal unity is not of Christ.

We feel and evidence supports the viewpoint that the conservatives are not in unity, and do not have the love and interest in each other which is a definite indication of a true church of Christ. As Paul said in the long ago to Barnabas, 'Let us go AGAIN and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, AND SEE HOW THEY DO.' This is the spirit of Christ, and the spirit of love and fellowship which seems to be so lacking amongst the churches today.

After the apostasy which almost destroyed the church, we find the conservatives divided amongst themselves and it is rare to find them united upon the word of God. You will find amongst the material we have sent, a list of about 69 questions upon which the conservative church is divided and too often too many ignorant of the answers. Why? Lack of study, lack of knowledge and **too much dependence upon the preacher for all the answers.** And this is the reason along with a great many practices and beliefs which are not sound nor scriptural that the conservatives have lost their brotherly love and their interest for each other.

Years ago Alexander Campbell fought the battle against the 'hired clergy'. However, he was greatly opposed; and the church to a great extent never has recovered from the pernicious 'hired clergy' practice. Not only that but it has grown to a proportion so large and unscriptural that it has corrupted the evangelistic system, along with those who practice it, and brought division and discord amongst brethren. It has brought about a lack of personal consecration to the work of the church by the members as well as that of the preachers. This want of individual interest in all the work of the church by all the members is a paralyzing weakness to the whole body; and the results are a lack of spiritual understanding and stunted spiritual growth.

Many, both preachers and members, seem wholly indisposed to practice that self denial and addiction to the gospel which should be a part of the life of all Christians. Too many hunt for an easy leisurely kind of life which was and is foreign to those of Bible times. One humble, self denying, sound in faith and

practice, earnest and dedicated preacher of the gospel is worth more than all the hundreds of 'hired for pay' preachers; and one dedicated and holy member of the church who is intent upon working to save their own as well as the souls of the lost is worth more than all the weak, contented and unconverted and lazy members of all the churches who subscribe to the doctrine of 'do nothing, see nothing and hear nothing.' Christ did not have an easy life, nor should we expect one; we will find our rest in heaven if we WORK for it.

These things have been said as a prelude to answering the questions which will follow. We know there are differences between us and it is important that we come into an accord upon the truth. We realize also that the church today is very worldly and materialistic; therefore inasmuch as Christ said, 'My words they are spirit and they are truth', it is necessary that we be holy and have spiritual understanding. The carnal mind is not subject to the spiritual; therefore we would ask that if you do not agree with our presentation of the truth that you **search the Bible earnestly and sincerely for the answers; do not depend upon man.**

We feel also that if there is disagreement between our answers that those of the Seminole church take the Bible and prove wherein we are in error; otherwise this letter would be a waste of time, futile and senseless. Christians don't play games or indulge in frivolous or questionable undertakings. We feel that brethren should always seek for TRUTH, and **be honest in their efforts to derive scriptural understanding of God's word**, so that all brethren might come into an agreement upon the gospel. We must believe alike and come into a scriptural understanding upon all scriptures. 1st Cor. 1:10.

QUESTION 1

Do you believe that John 14:26 and 16:13; 1st Corinthians 2:13; and 1st John 2:20 apply directly to you in giving you understanding of the truth?

ANSWER

Inasmuch as John 14:26 and John 16:13 were spoken directly to the apostles and 1st Corinthians 2:13 and 1st John 2:20 were written for Christians, we must of course deal with these scriptures in that relevancy or applicability. For a better understanding it might be well to consider the fact that as far as the gospel is concerned the apostles were no different from other Christians. They were not given any more knowledge of the gospel than any other child of God. Moses and the Israelites lived and obeyed the same law. The apostles and Christians all had and have the same law, or the same gospel. More knowledge or more understanding or more ability to know, believe, and obey the gospel was not a special privilege or gift given to the apostles and denied other Christians.

We do know and understand that the apostles were chosen by Christ for a special work. They were given the baptism of the Holy Spirit to help them in this work. Inasmuch as the gospel had to be preached and taught, and the word was not yet written, they were given the gift of laying on of hands. The gospel had to be confirmed by the miracles which were performed until such time as the word of God was finished; and the gospel had to be conferred or given to the apostles by the direct operation or work of the Holy Spirit. In this they were taught by the Holy Spirit and could not make any mistake in writing what the Holy Spirit taught them. That which Christ had taught them would be brought back to their remembrance so that it also could be written and be a part of the gospel.

The above explains that John 14:26 was spoken directly to the apostles and must be applied in that context. Also John 16:13 is spoken directly to the apostles. The Holy Spirit guided them into all truth (which is of course the inspired word of God); and as Christ said, 'My word is truth'; therefore they could not err in the writing of the gospel. The Holy Spirit would speak to them that which He would hear. Furthermore He would tell them 'of things to come:' and inasmuch as all of this has come to us today through the inspired word of God those things which they wrote and those things which were to come are part of the knowledge of all those who study and believe the gospel.

Our understanding of the gospel is of course derived from studying the gospel of Christ. The apostles did not have any advantage over all holy Christians in this respect. The only way the gospel of Christ can be understood by anyone, including the apostles, is by studying, or hearing the word of God. 'Faith cometh by hearing the word of God.' Rom. 10:17. The apostles and the early Christians took the word of God throughout all the world. Rom. 10:18. So John 14:26 and John 16:13 were spoken personally to the apostles and was meant for them personally. With the help of the Holy Spirit they were given the power to write the Gospel and to do so without error.

But the apostles were as vulnerable to sin and the devices of the devil as anyone else then or today. They had no more access to knowledge or understanding than we have. They had to 'fight the good fight of faith' the same as all Christians who hope for heaven. They had to believe, understand, and apply or obey the gospel the same as every Christian has to do. Miracles did not save people, nor were they so intended. Miracles were designed by God to confirm the gospel, until such time as the gospel would be finished. They had the indwelling of the Holy Spirit the same as all Christians. John 14:17 and John 7:39 and Acts 2:38 and Acts 5:32. We get our understanding, however, the same way in which the apostles acquired theirs. They had to receive the gospel, believe it, understand it and apply it to their daily lives and so do all Christians.

There is a sort of undefined belief that seems to prevail amongst the brotherhood that the apostles, perhaps because of their miraculous power and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, had a different understanding, and/or a more complete knowledge of the word of God, than others. We do not believe that the gospel will verify this belief. As Peter told Cornelius, 'Stand up: I myself also am a man.' Whatever help the apostles had in understanding, in knowing all things, in separating truth from error, and the ability to know the difference between religious lies and truth; as well as to compare spiritual things with spiritual, and to know the 'deep things of God,' all Christians have if they stay faithful to the word, study and grow into the holiness so necessary to inherit heaven.

In 1st Corinthians 2:13 we note that while Paul refers to himself in the first four verses of this chapter and also the 6th and 7th, it is quite evident that this chapter was written to the church, and was intended to instruct and teach the members of the church then and now. The 10th verse has sometimes been misconstrued and we will quote it, 'But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God,' but we believe that Paul intended that Christians know that the Holy Spirit reveals the gospel to those who obey and with His help we can know the deep things of God. Certainly we can't believe that the gospel was only revealed to the apostles, nor can we believe that the more profound things of God were reserved only for the apostles. The gospel was revealed in the beginning to the apostles but is revealed to us today in the New Testament.

We inserted this in here because we believe the 13th verse gives us also the wisdom which comes from God and this wisdom was not reserved for only the apostles. James 1:5 reads, 'If ANY OF YOU lack wisdom let him ASK OF GOD, that giveth to ALL MEN liberally, and unbraideth not; and IT SHALL BE GIVEN HIM.' Also Paul in 1st Cor. 2:5 reiterate this thought. Christians do not speak in man's wisdom when preaching or teaching the word of God. We also believe that the Holy Spirit teaches all Christians and helps them to compare the spiritual with the spiritual. The apostles had no advantage nor were they given preference by God in these holy things.

In 1st John 2:27 we read, 'But the anointing (Holy Spirit) which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.' This was written to Christians; and there is no possibility of gaining a correct understanding of this unless we admit that the Holy Spirit does in this dispensation help Christians not only to separate truth from error (1st John 4:6) and to know all truth, 1st John 2:20 and 21, as well as to help in correlating the scriptures that we might be

enabled to confirm and prove that which the scriptures teach. He teaches us in this manner as we study and learn.

By this method the function and work of the Holy Spirit is made apparent to all who believe that God gave His people the Gift of the Holy Spirit. We know He was given; and by many scriptures including the ones we have just utilized we are made to believe and know that all the church can come into an accord upon all scriptures. They can all know ALL truth. Christians are commanded to know and to obey ALL truth, and with the help of the Holy Spirit this can be realized. Without His help we find the church as it is today without accord, divided and striving with each other over simple scriptures. We wouldn't be at odds but we would be at peace and in fellowship with each other, if we believed and obeyed the things which are written in the gospel. There is and was only one gospel for ALL; and the apostles had the same gospel that we have today, not anymore nor any less. Read the lesson on the Holy Spirit attached herewith.

In John 14:16 and 17, and we quote the 17th verse, 'Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be IN you.' We have an indwelling of the Holy Spirit and so did the apostles. However they had of course the baptism of the Holy Spirit which was administered by Christ and was given only to the apostles, mainly for the purpose of confirming the gospel. Miracles were never meant to save; they were utilized to confirm the word until the word had been written; and the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the miracles which the apostles performed did not make them more knowledgeable than anyone else nor did it make them more holy. Only by obedience to the word do Christians then or now become righteous and holy. We are trying to separate miracles and the word; so that we may be more able to understand that knowledge comes by studying the word, and righteousness is attained by obedience to it, both for apostles and for all Christians then and now.

With this in mind we now want to expound upon 1st John 2:20, which we quote, 'But ye have an unction from the holy One, and ye know all things.' Certainly this verse as well as 1st Cor. 2:13 apply to Christians then and now, including the apostles, who had to obey the same gospel that all Christians have to obey. We do not know how this verse could be taken out of context to mean anything except that the 'unction from the Holy One' is of course the gift of the Holy Spirit in turn helps all Christians in attaining knowledge of ALL the scriptures.

As commanded in James, Christians must know all the gospel and obey all the gospel. 1st John 2:20 plainly reveals that without the aid of the Holy Spirit, who is given to all those who obey the gospel, the knowledge necessary for salvation could not be obtained. Certainly God would not be a respecter of

persons giving all knowledge to some and denying it to others. Therefore, by context and understanding of God's word we know that this verse applies directly to Christians.

If not what will we do with 1st John 2:21? We quote, 'I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but BECAUSE YE KNOW IT, AND THAT NO LIE IS OF THE TRUTH.' Does this apply to Christians? If we say it does then we must, if we value truth, acknowledge that verse 20 also applies directly to Christians. If not, why not? Cannot Christians know all things? The gospel of Christ is the truth. Should not all know the truth? Did the apostles have or know more truth than the other people of God? We do not think so. As far as truth, and/or knowledge is concerned all holy people of God can and must know all truth if they are to see heaven. The above verse as well as 1st John 2:20 cannot be explained except that by the help of the holy Spirit, which all Christians are given when baptized, all can come into a knowledge of ALL truth, if they study and apply the word of God.

1st John 4:4 and 6, and we quote verse 6, will help in the exegesis of the above verses, 'We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby KNOW WE THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR.' This fits with 1st John 2:20 and 21. To understand the gospel the indwelling of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for all Christians to come into an accord upon the gospel (TRUTH). The Holy Spirit also helped the apostles in understanding the gospel of truth. There was and is no difference in this respect between the apostles and all Christians. The difficulty in understanding amongst the brethren and the lack of accord has led to many disagreements about scriptures, simple ones at that, and can be attributed primarily to the rejection of the work and function of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation. However, that which we have written on the preceding pages, if they are understood and believed, will prove that the Holy Spirit does have an active part in our lives as we struggle to attain knowledge and holiness in this life.

QUESTION 2

Do you believe you or Merie Weiss could be wrong on any doctrine you teach?

ANSWER

If Christians could never make a mistake in doctrine they would be infallible. As a babe in the church we are taught to 'desire the sincere milk of the word.' Strong meat, knowledge and wisdom belong 'to those who are of full age, who have had their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.' 1st Peter 2:1 and 2 and Heb. 5:12 to 14. God draws a distinction between the babe

and the older and more knowledgeable in the church. Brother Cluff is a babe and Merie Weiss older by many years both in age and as a Christian. One has many years to go before acquiring the knowledge and wisdom which comes with faith, study, experience and holiness; but in the process he and all Christians will attain holiness, wisdom and knowledge if they endure and grow.

Brother Cluff, sister Weiss and all Christians as they study and learn will make mistakes. As wisdom, knowledge and holiness are attained, the less the mistakes. We believe that Christians can know all things, separate truth from error and tell religious lies from truth; as well as compare the spiritual with the spiritual. Eventually the knowledge obtained will give those who grow in grace and knowledge of God, and who study to be approved of God, the ability to be sound in the doctrine and always teach the truth. A good rule to follow as we grow in the faith is never to teach anything we cannot prove. If we admit the apostles could know all truth we are assured that God is no respecter of persons and all Christians can know all truth.

In school we learned algebra, grammar, history etc., and as we learned we made mistakes, but the time came when we knew these things and knew how to get the correct answers. There is no difference in learning the truth of God's word. Eventually, by study, prayer and with the help of learned brethren and the aid of the Holy Spirit, we can come into a knowledge of all things. Everybody makes mistakes, but the Bible has been so written that we can confirm what we teach and know we have the right understanding of the doctrine. On the other hand, the Bible also will enlighten us if we search for the truth and let us know when we have made a mistake. We will make mistakes, but if we study and seek the truth we are told by Christ that we will be given it. 'Seek and ye shall find'.

We might add here that Peter made a mistake and 'walked not uprightly before God' because he, as well as others, influenced by his actions, refused to eat with their Gentile brethren. But Paul came and rebuked him and helped his brethren to know the truth. Galatians 2:11 to 14. Paul also in Acts 21:17 to 30 was persuaded to make a very bad mistake by the elders in Jerusalem. He purified himself with those who had a vow, and went into the temple and offered offerings. We know Paul made this mistake, but we only have to read Gal. 5:1 to 6 to know that Paul was given the truth upon this mistake he made. And in Acts 15, we find brethren coming together and solving a problem of false teaching and making decisions about it. God said, 'Prove all things;' and as we attain knowledge and wisdom, we will make mistakes, but God will see to it that we obtain the truth.

QUESTION 3

Do you believe it is unscriptural for a congregation to pay a

preacher to work regularly with them?

ANSWER

Inasmuch as there is not a scripture nor an example in the New Testament of any man preaching regularly for a congregation and drawing a salary for it, we definitely believe it to be unscriptural. The system practiced today throughout the brotherhood, as well as the denominational world, for hiring a man to preach for money is pernicious in its effect upon the preacher and the church itself. Furthermore there is no scriptural evidence that the preachers of the New Testament worked for salaries and rotated from one established church to another.

This pernicious practice began in the days of Alexander Campbell, and he fought against such without much success, and he was opposed vigorously by some. So today those of us who see not only the error, but the corrupting influence of a practice which cannot be found in the New Testament will probably be opposed also. The most detrimental effect of paying preachers who rotate from one established church to another is that it helped to destroy the New Testament system of evangelism. The mission of the church is to convert the lost. How can this God-given mission be fulfilled when the preachers instead of becoming evangelists and going where the gospel has not been preached and converting the lost, they constantly preach to the already converted. And they have to be paid to do it.

Paul set the example in 1st Cor. 9:1 to 19. He made it very plain he did not preach for money: but he preached because he had to. He wanted to save souls. He teaches that the evangelist should be supported by the church as they traveled from place to place ESTABLISHING CHURCHES. In the 18th verse he said and we quote, 'What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ WITHOUT CHARGE, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.' In 2nd Cor. 8 and 9 he makes it very clear that the churches that have an abundance are to help those which are poor.

In Romans 15:20 Paul traveled from place to place establishing churches WHERE THE WORD OF GOD HAD NOT BEEN PREACHED. We quote, 'Yea, so I have strived to preach the gospel, NOT WHERE CHRIST WAS NAMED, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: but as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.' An established church always has plenty of men to preach and carry on the work. What the church of Christ has neglected to do is to send the preacher (who should want to be an evangelist) to those places where there is no church (the United States is full of cities where the gospel has not been preached), and support him as he travels from state to state and city to city taking the gospel of Christ to the dying and lost of this world.

This is what is taught in the New Testament: but this New Testament practice has been destroyed by greedy and covetous men who have used their ability to preach to make a livelihood and have neglected to take the word out to the lost as commanded by Christ. A preacher who is doing evangelistic work and saving souls, with the help of the church, should be continually converting those from the world to Christianity. All of the church should be involved in the saving of souls. 'My ministers are as a flame of fire.' But because of lack of love and zeal for the lost the flame has gone out, and the fire has dwindled into dead ashes.

QUESTION 4

Do you believe clean humor is always out of place?

ANSWER

This is rather an ambiguous question. We will try and not take it lightly, but answer it as we understand it. We might say that we believe it would be rather trying if not impossible to go through life without a smile or a laugh. So we will presume to assume that the one who asked the questions wanted a serious or Biblical answer, and did not really intend to insert the 'always' in the sentence.

It might make us all think a little about humor per se if we realized that from Genesis to Revelation, encompassing the history of God's people for approximately 6,000 years, that there is not one word, one sentence, or one humorous incident related of any kind that one could think of as being humorous or even bring a smile to our lips. This ought to make some of the preachers who use witty remarks and other jestful utterances to arouse laughter or approval or whatever, think more seriously when they preach; and to realize that the Bible is a very grave and awesome Book, and that those who preach and teach and endeavor to live it must also be grave and sober people

Christians are commanded over and over to be grave and sober people. We have a tremendous and stupendous task before us; that of saving our souls as well as that of others. There is nothing humorous about this: nor does a Christian who takes his work seriously take it lightly. So from the pulpit, from our teaching and in our behavior, we show forth a people who are dedicated, grave and sober, cheerful, loving, kind and peaceful. What more could we add. There is no place for humor in preaching and teaching and the saving of souls. It is a serious business.

We quote Ephesians 5:4 which will suffice in teaching us what the Book teaches about this question, --'Let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not

convenient: but rather giving of thanks.' Read 1st Peter 1:13, Titus 2:2, 2nd Cor. 5:13 and 1st Tim. 3:2. These will help all Christians to understand the great and grave responsibility which we have to save the world, and ourselves. In working to save ourselves and others we are given peace, joy and comfort, and frivolous, worldly and foolish talking are not a part of a Christian's life.

QUESTION 5

Do you teach your members to make detailed, regular confessions before the congregation? Do you consider other congregations improper if they do not do this?

ANSWER

The Bible teaches repentance and confession are a required part of a Christian's life both private and public. Under Moses law sin had to be confessed and punishment was quite often commanded. In Leviticus 5:5, we read, 'And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he hath sinned IN THAT THING.' Read Numbers 5:6 and 7. The principle here is that public sins must be confessed and the sin made public also. Ezra 10:1 and Nehemiah 9:2 and 3. In these last scriptures we learn that the Israelites confessed their sins publicly; they read the law, confessed and worshipped. This is similar to the principle and to scriptures in the New Testament and to our practice. James 5:16.

We teach the difference between public and private sins. However, it is necessary for the church to be watchful and feel just as much responsibility in confessing public sins, which are those which bring reproach upon the church, as it is to ask God's forgiveness for our private sins, and/or those between individual brethren.

Matthew 5:23 and 24 teaches us when we have sinned against a brother or a brother has sinned against us, we must take care of the sin before we can worship God acceptably. So the necessary inference is if we have sinned against the brethren as a body then we must if we are to please God, ask all the church for forgiveness, before we are acceptable before God. We note that in Matt. 18:15 to 17 that when there is a matter to be settled between two brethren and it cannot be handled in that manner that it is to be TAKEN BEFORE ALL THE CHURCH. It is widely practiced amongst the brotherhood to take matters of this kind before the elders only, or that it be settled by just the men of the congregation. But the scriptures teach matters of this kind, as well as others, are to be taken before ALL the church. 1st Cor. 6:1 to 6 will confirm this exegesis of the above. Therefore it is a sin to transgress the teaching of Matt. 18:15 to 17 and 1st Cor. 6:1 to 8

In Luke 17:3 we note that this verse also sets a principle wherein the individual Christian has a responsibility towards an erring brother. We note also that if the brother does not repent and turn away from his sin that we are not to forgive him. God does not forgive us if we do not repent of our sins; therefore we are not obligated to forgive a brother who is guilty of sin and who does not repent and turn away from it. The necessary inference would be that if those who are guilty of public sins do not repent, turn away from them and confess them before the church and ask for forgiveness, they are not forgiven by God nor by the congregation.

Read 2nd Cor. 7:8 to 13 wherein we find the members of the Corinthian church, who had been publicly rebuked by Paul in his letter to them in 1st Cor. 5:1 and 2 for not taking care of the sin of the fornicator, were publicly confessing their sins of pride, lack of love and lack of responsibility towards an erring brother, who was openly living in sin. The fornicator's sin was public and the sin of the church was also public and was manifested by their allowing such wickedness to go unheeded among them.

We teach that those who sin publicly must repent and confess their sin before they can be forgiven by God or the church. If this is long and in detail the one who is confessing makes the decision as to what to say and in what detail. We also believe that because public confession is not taught properly many never confess their public sins and are cut off from God, and without hope in this world. We believe that the church has a responsibility to teach their members that public sins must be repented of, confessed, and the sin made known (else how could the members of the church forgive a brother if they did not know his sin?). A church which neglects this vital and important responsibility is breaking the law of Christ.

QUESTION 6

Is watching television a sin? Would you bind your conclusions on other congregations?

ANSWER

Watching television per se would not necessarily be sinful. But what is looked at could be a sin and could lead to sinful thoughts. Inasmuch as Christians are commanded to 'gird up their minds' and to think on the holy, and the good, the just and the lovely (Philippians 4:8), it would seem paradoxical to think the television in any way could help or benefit any Christian in holiness or obedience.

Television is one of the most corrupting and evil influences ever invented to destroy spiritual and godly integrity. It is a waste of time, it leads to spiritual apathy, it keeps many from studying their Bibles; even from attending services.

It also has a deteriorating effect upon the morals and thinking of both children and adults. That should answer the question in full. Even the world recognizes the evil effect of television and many have written of its pernicious effects upon those who watch it regularly.

Inasmuch as it can be turned off at will it has an advantage in that respect over a movie. There is another aspect about television which is different from a movie, but also is more dangerous in some ways which is that it is right in the home where the temptation to be entertained by questionable as well as worldly and even evil influences is always present. Furthermore, Christian women who have husbands who are not members of the church have no choice in banning it from the home. Therefore, the conscience of those who are subject to its influence must be their guide in rejecting such a worldly and pernicious instrument capable of producing so much harm. We teach against such. Other congregations will have to make up their own minds in this respect.

QUESTION 7

Is going to a movie a sin? Would you bind your conclusions on other congregations?

ANSWER

We believe it is a sin to go to movies; and we thus teach. All that is said of the influence for evil about the television can be said about the attendance at movies, and more. There is a very thin line drawn between looking at television and going to a movie, and that is the motivation. The television can be turned off or tuned in to another station if what is on the screen is objectionable or unclean. But in GOING to a movie there has to be a deliberate intent and a clear understanding of what will be shown. **Inasmuch as there is no such thing as a good movie; and on the other hand most of them are so vile and filthy that no decent person, much less a Christian, would want to corrupt themselves with such, we would be compelled to conclude that any Christian who would have a desire to go to a movie would have to be motivated by sensual and unclean desires.**

God has commanded that Christians be pure in heart, mind and understanding. Therefore, any Christian who would seek to look (sin through the eyes) at such drivel, unwholesome and actually detrimental to the soul as the movies, would have to be motivated by sinful desires. Furthermore, it is a public manifestation of a shameful and worldly habit. Movies are harmful to a pure and holy life. They, as well as television, are made to satisfy the worldly and lascivious appetites of those who seek pleasure and like to look at sinful things. To say the least, any Christian intent upon saving his soul would never have an inclination to see such a worldly and debasing kind of thing. Any Christian who

resorts to such a degrading pleasure is suspect so far as his purity and holiness is concerned.

God's word teaches to 'abhor sin'. We believe God's word binds all Christians to a pure, holy, clean and righteous life; and this kind of mind and life cannot be found amongst those who frequent movie houses which have the effect of destroying everything noble, clean and holy. Read Rom. 12:1 and 2 and Colossians 3:1 to 17. These verses alone will keep every Christian who values his soul, and looks for the life beyond, to avoid that which abounds in lustful and sinful pleasures which are destructive to the soul.

QUESTION 8

Is going to any recreational activity a sin? Would you bind your conclusions on other congregations?

ANSWER

Recreational activity varies with the individual. Some activities could be very sinful; others perhaps not so sinful but pernicious in their effects. All are worthless to a Christian's efforts to live a holy and profitable life in this world. **There will be no recreational activities, baseball games, golf, tennis, movie houses or television sets in heaven. So why develop a taste for such here?** It would seem that too many Christians have their minds and hearts set on things of this world, and completely overlook the fact that man was put here on earth to glorify God.

If those of the church of Christ would turn their minds from movies, television, baseball, golf, trips to the 'holy land', vacations, card games and recreational activities of all kinds, and leave the worldly and soul destructive pleasures of this world to the world, and concentrate their efforts solely and completely to studying the Bible and applying it to their lives and to the saving of the lost, they might attain heaven. Only a life completely and wholly given to glorifying God while here on earth will suffice or make it possible for Christians to attain heaven. The world and spiritual things do not mix. A complete severance is necessary for spiritual survival. 2nd Tim. 2:3 and 4, and we quote the 4th verse, 'No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.' Also 1st Tim 4:8 to 16.

Therefore, it is easily understood that Christians cannot involve themselves with the affairs of this world, which would include those things already enumerated, and include political as well as other worldly endeavors, which in themselves perhaps are not sinful, but they are worldly. James 4:4 reads, 'Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is an enemy of God.' We realize that there are those who have to work to make

the necessities available for their families or themselves; and that some involvement is necessary in this manner. But to those who seek heaven, who are spiritually alive and determined to change the carnal into the spiritual, who realize that this world is not their home, and who spend their time in seeking a heavenly one, the pathway is clear. Read Galatians 5:16 to 26. 'Walk in the Spirit -'.

QUESTION 9

Is it a sin for a Christian to be in the armed services and go to war?
Would you bind your conclusion on other congregations?

ANSWER

The first part of this question should be divided into two parts; and we will answer it in that context. It is not a sin for a Christian to be in the armed services. We think after a man has become a Christian that it would be a sin for him to join an organization wherein he might be called upon to kill. Furthermore, being in the armed services makes it almost impossible for a man to be free to worship God at all times.

Therefore, we teach and advise those who are in the service at the time of their conversion, that if possible, they return to civilian life where they can be free to worship and do the works of God in a more perfect manner. Also, where they can have the fellowship with the saints, can have access to learning and be free to study and grow in the grace of God in more spiritually healthy surroundings.

We believe and teach that the Bible is clear that a Christian cannot kill. John the Baptist said to the two soldiers who came to Him, 'Do violence to no man.' In Isaiah 2:1 to 4 teaching of the church in prophecy that God's people would not go to war anymore. 'They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.'

And so in the New Testament we find no scripture or example of any kind which would lead us to believe that a Christian could kill his fellowman for any reason whatsoever. However, we do find where Christians are commanded to love their enemies; and to do good unto all men. They also were commanded to be a peaceful people full of good works. God reminded them in Rom. 12:17 to 21 He would avenge wrongs done, and we quote, 'Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: For it is written, VENGEANCE IS MINE; I WILL REPAY, saith the Lord.' These words speak for themselves. Holy people of God trust in Him to protect them from their enemies; therefore, a Christian does not have to kill anyone.

In James 4:1 to 4 and we quote verses 1 and 2, 'From whence come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.' So no Christian could kill without transgressing the commandment of God. Wars and fighting come FROM THE LUST OF THE FLESH. It matters not whom we war and fight with or for what purpose, the Lord says that killing comes from the LUST OF THE FLESH. Read Rom. 8:6 to 8. No Christian, who hopes to obtain a home in heaven, can live after the flesh and expect to inherit a home in heaven.

1st John 2:15 to 17 reads, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. FOR ALL THAT IS IN THE WORLD, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is NOT OF THE FATHER, but is of the world.' So it is very plain that those who kill are of the world. Anyone who would be willing to sacrifice his life or kill another to please the world for any reason whatsoever, would have to love the world a great deal. 1st John 3:10 reads, 'In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.' One would have to stretch the word of God and then twist it to even think His word teaches that Christians can kill, much less that killing could be righteous.

You ask again if we bind our conclusions upon other congregations and of course it is apparent that in answering all the previous questions, as well as this one, and those to come, that **we do not make our own conclusions, except as we can prove them by the word of God, or teach our own opinions.** We have given scripture for everything we have taught in this lesson; therefore, if God's word binds, the scriptures which we have used to prove that which we teach, then it is of course bound upon all Christians, not just those at Spring Valley. There is only one gospel and if those in the church want to go to heaven they will all have to come into an accord upon the word of God; and they will all have to speak the same thing, and practice the same thing. Inasmuch as this is not so amongst the churches of Christ, all should search the scriptures and seek for truth and obey it. That leaves no place for opinions nor conclusions of any kind unless they are justified by the gospel of Christ.

QUESTION 10

Do you believe that the King James translation of the scriptures is the most accurate of all translations? Would you bind your conclusions on others?

ANSWER

Yes. We believe the King James translation of the scriptures to be by far the most accurate and most scholarly of all translations. Despite the use of

some words which are obsolete now, this does not mar the meaning nor the beauty of its composition, which excels any other translation. We warn Christians against the use of most of the Bibles which are printed now, because most of them are either deliberately perverted, added to and taken away from; the meaning distorted and also falsified. Some are nothing more than some man's commentary. These are harmful and misrepresent the truth. They can do much harm. **The American Standard is the only other translation which in our opinion has merit.**

We believe that everyone is free to use whatever translation he desires. We might say here that most of the Bibles we know about are not translations at all, but are falsely represented as such. We recognize the fact that there are all kinds of versions which are supposed to help people understand better, but this also is a false claim. Those who are careless in choosing a Bible may come to unscriptural and harmful conclusions which could cost them their souls, so it is important to choose the best.

QUESTION 11

Do you believe that the Holy Spirit directly guides you in knowing who will be receptive to the gospel and who will not be?

ANSWER

If we understand your question right the answer is 'no'. If this were true then we could save a great deal of time and energy by eliminating many of the doors which we knock upon, and the houses that we visit. Even the apostles were not given this miraculous type of help, at least only in isolated instances. However, we do believe that God intervenes and interferes in the lives of Christians and in the affairs of the world in this dispensation. Rom. 13:1 to 7.

We believe that the Holy Spirit is still active in the bodies of the saints. 1st Cor. 6:19; Romans 5:5; 1st Thess. 4:8; 1st John 3:24; 1st John 2:20, 21 and 27, as well as Romans 8:26 and 27; Eph. 4:30 and Romans 8:9, 10, 11, and 13. In these verses you will note that the Holy Spirit can be grieved, therefore they can't mean the word. In 1st John 2:27 we note that the Holy Spirit teaches the holy people of God; and 1st John 4:6 helps them to separate truth from error. Again this could not be the word, but the Holy Spirit doing His work independent of the word but always in harmony with it.

In Romans 8:13 we read, and we quote, 'For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify (kill) the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14th verse, 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' We believe that all Christians who are obedient to the word of God and who struggle to live the holy life here on earth are helped in killing the flesh by the Holy Spirit. This is a work of the Holy Spirit in assisting all Christians in

applying and living by the word of God and is independent of the word. It is perverting the gospel to substitute the 'word' for the Holy Spirit. And in all these verses as well as the ones employed in the Holy Spirit Lesson, attached hereto, it is apparent as well as easily understood that the work of the Holy Spirit and the word are two different mediums by and through which God works.

We say this to emphasize that we believe that God is actively engaged in doing His will upon this earth whenever He so wills; Christ is busy interceding for the saints therefore is carrying out His mission; and the Holy Spirit given as a Gift by God to those who obey Him, Acts 5:32, is functioning in the capacity that God ordained that He should. 1st Cor. 3:16 and 1st Cor. 6:19 and Rom. 8:26 and 27. In Heb. 1:14 we learn that the angels of God minister to the saints. How? Read the Holy Spirit lesson. Ps. 33:10 to 19; Ps. 34:7, 15 and 17.

Therefore, if God and the angels are still actively engaged in interfering and intervening in the lives of holy children of God; we also believe that the Holy Spirit is also working amongst us. We believe Christ when He said. 'Seek and ye shall find.' Therefore, we believe that at times God sees that one of His servants is led by the Holy Spirit to those who cry to Him for knowledge and help in knowing Him. God knows those who will obey Him and stay faithful to Him. We do not believe that we are led around by the Holy Spirit constantly or in every way, but we do believe the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is actually working in helping us to do the works so necessary for our salvation.

Read the Holy Spirit lesson and it will explain much more clearly our definite and unmistakable proof by the Bible of the actual work of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation. It is unbelief not to believe in the Third Person of the Godhead, which many deny and confuse with the word. If we believe the devil to be actively engaged in doing his evil works amongst the people of God why do we have so much difficulty in believing in work of the Holy Spirit? 1st Peter 5:8.

QUESTION 12

Do you consider the churches on Seminole Drive in San Diego, and on Johnson Street in El Cajon to be faithful, sound congregations? Do you believe one could attend either of these churches regularly and be pleasing to God?

ANSWER

We will try and answer this question as honestly and as briefly as possible. We hope also that all who read our answer to this question will give heed to what we say realizing that we are only doing what we have been asked to do, and certainly in the right spirit. If we are effective in helping those who read this to examine their beliefs and their knowledge and consider their lives in the light

of God's word, then we feel that perhaps good can come from our evaluation of the spiritual condition of the Seminole and Johnson Street churches.

You will also have a much more thorough understanding if you will read the rest of the material enclosed herein of why we consider these two churches not to be faithful, sound congregations. We believe that Revelation 3:1 to be applicable to these churches, and we quote, 'And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that THOU HAST A NAME THAT THOU LIVEST, and art DEAD.'

A church which is alive spiritually, a church which is doing the works of God would be full of zeal, brotherly kindness and in fellowship with righteous brethren. 'If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.' 1st John 1:7. These questions which have been asked of us are indicative and fully expose the lack of love and brotherly kindness which are so essentially a part of the true Christian life.

We feel that those who had part in the writing of these questions to the Spring Valley church of Christ reveal most blatantly a prejudgement of the church, which is neither fair nor honest; and the motive for so doing is questionable. A faithful church of Christ would never tolerate men who would stoop to such a deplorable lack of good taste; much less such a disrespectful disregard for the feelings of Christian brethren in a matter such as this. **This explains one of the reasons we consider these churches to be DEAD.**

However, we do feel we should explain more thoroughly our reasons for what we have said, so that the churches will know it is not based upon anything personal but because you requested it. 'Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.' Matt. 7:19 and 20. The mission of the church is to save the souls of the lost. These two congregations do not have the necessary fruit which would prove them to be faithful and sound churches of Christ. When the sound gospel is proclaimed to sinners there will be constant baptisms which pour forth the evidence of a church interested in working and teaching and saving the lost. **When few, if any baptisms, then it is evident the church is not working; that it is dead.**

The lack of fruit in these two congregations is a result of the man made system of hiring a man to preach, who in turn rotates from one established church to another at a salary. Thus, the scriptural plan for evangelizing the world by going into places where the gospel is not preached and converting the lost is negated. (Rom. 15:20; 2nd Cor. 10:13 to 18) A man made plan is substituted for the God given plan of the Bible. And the pernicious effects of not

taking the gospel into all the world that those who have never heard might hear and obey is seen in the lack of baptisms and lack of zeal and spiritual growth among the members.

In the corrupt and mercenary atmosphere where paying the preacher's salary becomes almost the sole motivation for whatever is done in the church, the love for the brethren, knowledge, zeal, spiritual judgment, and working to save the souls of sinners is lost in worldly pursuits and unscriptural practices and preaching. In 1st John 3:14 we read, 'He that loveth not his brother abideth in death'. In the refusal of the El Cajon church to let the Spring Valley church baptize a woman who had heart trouble, we prove the lack of love of the brethren, not only for the brethren but for the soul of the woman who desired to obey God's word.

All of God's people are COMMANDED to come into an accord upon the scriptures and to 'all speak the same thing.' When we find that this is not being obeyed, and evidence is plain that congregations are divided upon the very plain commandments of the gospel, then we know that someone is in error. When these same congregations do not have zeal and do not train the members to go forth into the world and teach and preach to the lost, then we can know that they are lukewarm. Rev. 3:16 we read, 'So then because thou are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.'

God rejects a dead or lukewarm church. However, there may be a few 'who walk in robes of white.' Rev. 3:4 'Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.' If there are any in these two congregations who read this letter, then they will recognize that that which they are following is a substitute for the true word of God. 'Come ye out from amongst them, saith the Lord'; and if those who are not entangled in the world, and are still seeking for the truth, and are walking in robes of white, then we would say join the ranks of the faithful and holy people of God.

One more thing and we will close this long letter. That which really separates the true congregations and those which have lost everything, but their name, is the rejection of the Holy Spirit. Because of poor judgment and lack of spiritual discernment they have rejected the work and function of the Holy Spirit. There seems to be a wide spread belief amongst the brotherhood that the Holy Spirit does nothing more than that which the word does. This cannot of course be found in the Bible; and all that believe such are accepting a man made mandate. Read the Holy Spirit lesson attached herewith. Also 1st Cor. 6:19; 1st Cor. 3:16; 1st Thess. 4:8; 2nd Tim. 1:14 and Rom. 8:11 and 13 and verses 26 and 27. All these teach that the Holy Spirit is within the mortal bodies of the saints; and all teach that He functions and does the work which God ordained

that He should do. This is the primary reason for all of our differences and is the cause of the division throughout the brotherhood.