

GEMS OF TRUTH

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FROM THE EDITOR

Over the years the more I've studied and thought about the big issues of life, death, the involvement of God in history, faith and human behavior I've had to realize that there are more questions by far than there are absolute answers. I could provide a long list of questions that thinkers have struggled with for many centuries but to share such a list would not be helpful because most people prefer not to even think about questions that don't have clear answers. Many books have

been written on these troubling questions with different answers by equally sincere and honest students. As we follow our journey we go forward hoping for something better in the future. Most of the time that is all we can do. Hope for the future is very important for without that life can really be tough. What I'm learning is *to surrender to the mystery and to commit into the hands of God all the many things I probably never will fully understand in this present life.* I'm content with the promise of Romans 8:28 that all things work for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. As I reflect upon my life I can see how the difficulties that I would never have wished to experience worked for my good in the bigger picture. If nothing else they've helped me learn to identify more sincerely with the trials that others experience and to be less judgmental and not feeling that I constantly must make comments or give advice. Many times prayerful silence is the best response. The articles in this issue relate somewhat to the overall theme of working with the mysteries of life.

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THE WIND BLOWS WHEREVER IT WANTS

John 3:8 New Living Translation (NLT)

8 “The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can’t tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can’t explain how people are born of the Spirit.”

So many times people have a set idea of just *how* the Holy Spirit should work, *where*, and *when*. Over the past 60 years of spiritual study and church attendance I’ve simply had to learn to *surrender to God’s workings in people’s lives and stop trying to reason it all out*. Recently I met a friend on the bus who was telling me of a marked move of God with two members of his family who had previously adopted a very atheistic worldview along with a rather negative and sometimes

even hateful attitude towards him. They had both been recently experiencing a wonderful move of God in their lives and were now showing a loving attitude towards him. This change was not due to any contact with a church or having someone “witness” to them. My friend had nothing whatsoever to do with causing this change. It was a sovereign move of God.

One thing I’ve had to deal with, especially over the past 30 years since I opened up to a wider picture of spirituality, is the variety of ways that God works to transform people. He seems to know nothing about the religious labels or groups that we human beings have invented. God is simply in the business of blessing people wherever they happen to be (see 2 Chronicles 16:9; Jeremiah 29:11).

The first 29 years of my spiritual journey I was in a denominational belief system that viewed itself as having “the truth” for the last days of history and I tended numerous times to see what some thought were moves of God in other spiritual groups to be “of the devil” or simply of human origin. In 1980 I cautiously began to venture out and have dialogue and fellowship with people who were seeking God and experiencing spiritual renewal and blessings in ways that were foreign to me at the time but the Holy Spirit quickly began to break down the walls of prejudice and misinformation. I repented before the Lord in tears when I began to experience His love and presence in ways that I hadn’t before. I was convicted that I had been very Pharisaical in my attitude towards others who differed considerably from me in the way they experienced God. I opened my heart to receive whatever God had for me in whatever way and from whatever source it would come. I am still committed to that process. We need to be very careful that just because God is greatly blessing in a particular situation



that He isn't also equally blessing in many others places and ways also. There is a human tendency to want to confine God to our very narrow religious ghettos.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night he was seeking for another piece of information since he was a highly educated Pharisee. I would like to submit my summary of what I think was the essence of what Jesus was telling Nicodemus:

“It isn't more information that you need. You must be born of God, that is have the enlightenment of the Spirit. God's Spirit works according to God's sovereign will and is not bound to any human process of reasoning, accumulation of information, or to any particular religious belief system. If you want to enter the Kingdom of God you must be born of the Spirit and get past all human scheming and attempts to control the way God works.”

It seems to me that it is wise to simply *surrender completely to God's Spirit and be open to all the ways God is at work.*

GIVE WITHOUT EXPECTATIONS

Luke 6:35-36 The Message (MSG)

³⁵⁻³⁶ "I tell you, love your enemies. Help and give without expecting a return. You'll never—I promise—regret it. Live out this God-created identity the way our Father lives toward us, generously and graciously, even when we're at our worst. Our Father is kind; you be kind."



These verses cover all areas of doing good but I want to consider the aspect of giving of ourselves when we pray for others. We often have an agenda, possibly not even consciously known to ourselves, when we pray some “that” prayer for someone else. We may think we are doing good for another person by praying for them with a specific outcome in mind, a really good one, but our prayer could well be motivated or colored by our definition of what is best for that person. Perhaps he or she needs to learn in ways

that we think are not so good but could be the very best for the long term.

I'm working on learning to simply embrace others in God's love and set aside my own personal ideas of what I think should be the results. We may pray for peace in the world or

in our immediate living situation from the motivation of being free from the personal annoyance that comes to us by the lack of peace. We have far too many “that’s” in our prayers and many times they are reflections of our ego. When we help someone or do something good we need to be alert as to our motives. Our “God-created identity” is His image and likeness and as we express that identity in simplicity, without any personal agenda, we will do the greatest possible good in the world.

CAN YOU DISCOVER EVERYTHING?

Job 11:7 New Living Translation (NLT)

7 “Can you solve the mysteries of God? Can you discover everything about the Almighty?”

I never cease to be amazed at the arrogance of those who believe that they have the complete truth about God or that some specific belief that they hold is perfect and never to be questioned. Perhaps we could liken God to a huge ocean and imagine we are standing on the shore pondering the depths of that body of water before our eyes. If you've ever watched any documentaries on the topic of "ocean" you'll soon find out how mystified are even the best scientists in really understanding what exists and what is going on in the depths of those waters. Think about the infinity of the universe and of eternity which defy any human imagination. Eternity is defined as having no beginning and no end. Can our human minds even begin to fathom what that really means? Scientists tell us that the physical universe is constantly expanding and that no scientific instruments known can even come close to plumbing its depths. Even our own solar system is only dimly understood let alone billions of other galaxies.



As I read the "This We Believe" statements of churches I'm astounded how arrogant they can appear to be. In some cases these statements are strictly enforced and anyone who publicly disagrees with anything in them will be ostracized from the group. I do indeed hold to certain beliefs about God and the faith journey which provide a sense of structure and meaning to my life but I also have realized over the years that whatever I believe, at best, is only a faint glimmer of the absolute truth. The path of those who follow God grows brighter unto the perfect day (see Proverbs 4:18; 1 Corinthians 13:12). The part that is exciting to me is the *brighter* part. The spiritual journey is always fresh for those who really devote themselves to it. The things of this material world eventually fade out and vanish. The wonders of God grow *brighter and brighter* with each passing day. The life we have in God

is eternal and abundant and the more we partake of it the better every part of our life will be (see John 10:10).

I'm finding that it is wise to have a heart filled with humility and keep in mind that to *experience* God's love is far more important than thinking we must have every jot and tittle of information exactly right. Just think of how many people have killed one another over beliefs! What do *you* think?

STAY ALERT

Matthew 26:40-41 The Message (MSG)

40-41 When he came back to his disciples, he found them sound asleep. He said to Peter, "Can't you stick it out with me a single hour? Stay alert; be in prayer so you don't wander into temptation without even knowing you're in danger. There is a part of you that is eager, ready for anything in God. But there's another part that's as lazy as an old dog sleeping by the fire."



As human beings we have two parts to our nature--one that wants to serve God and another that is very resistant to, hateful toward and wants to run away from God. The Bible is unmistakably clear on this.

Theologians have used a variety of terms for our negative side such as "original sin," "sinful nature," "flesh," "total depravity," and "mortal mind." Sometimes these have been confusing. In Romans 7:14-25 Paul discusses at length these two parts of human existence. Some students have emphasized

our bad part practically almost to the exclusion

of anything good that could be said and others have virtually ignored our dark side. It makes sense to me to recognize that we have within us possibilities for unlimited good and total evil as well. Human behavior proves this beyond doubt. Super religious people have done very evil deeds and nonreligious people have done wonderful deeds that have blessed the world. Some of the most heinous acts of cruelty towards humanity have been done in the name of God and righteousness. Those responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus were among the most religious who've ever lived.

We need to constantly be alert because the negative part of our nature, like a roaring lion, is always lurking in the shadows waiting to spring forth into action at any given moment (see 1 Peter 5:8). The teachings of continual surrender to God and depending upon Him moment

by moment are very important and will never become outdated. We have an ever present Savior who never lets us down.

THE LIVING WATERS

One of the greatest spiritual teachers who ever walked this earth has told us that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Throughout every age there have been men and women of discernment who have discovered that this is true. Some have left a testament of their discovery in the scriptures of the world -- a record of courage, strength, and inspiration, a revelation of unfolding consciousness. The experience of these illumined men and women is a constant reminder that we do not live merely by work, food, and rest, but that there is another factor that enters life which is far more important than any of these human activities. This factor is the "word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."



The Word becomes the living waters. It is our protection, our safety, our security. As we go about our tasks and duties, even though we may go through deep waters and be tried in the fire of experience, the waters will not overflow us and the flames will not kindle upon us, if the word of God is in us and with us. It is our meat, our water, and our bread of life, our staff on which to lean. But the Word must be more than a quotation from a book. It must come alive within us; it must be a vital, living force. Its essence or substance must become part of our own consciousness, no longer words, but the Word. Then it lives and functions for us eternally. Joel Goldsmith, *Living the Infinite Way*



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