

# GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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## THE REALITY OF GOD

### Part Three

By Rayola Kelley

“God,” this very word brings some kind of mental picture or reaction to a person. Who would think that a small three-letter word would conjure up a variety of images, attitudes, and responses? The concept of God can be vague, rendering Him into some impersonal force, it can become sentimental in light of a baby in a manger or the brutality of Calvary, or it can cause anger, resentment, and rage in those who judge God according to the insane, cruel injustice of the world we live in.



Regardless of how people try to deny the existence of God or make God into a mere conjunction of ideas, sentiments, and imaginations, there is no getting around the fact that even the unbelief of the atheist towards God, in essence declares that some God exists. After all, how can you hold to unbelief towards something if it does not exist in the first place? How can you make it a cause to get rid of something that does not exist? How can you erect a belief system that rejects the essence of a holy, just God if He does not exist? According to *Romans 1:20*, we have the very witness of creation that declares that there is a powerful God, and that in the end there will be no excuse for not believing what it declares about His existence, His nature, and His power. It is for this reason that *Psalms 14:1* and *53:1* make the same declaration, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”

There is evidence enough that there is a God. The question is why is the fool bent on rejecting Him? *Psalms*

*14:1* explains that such a fool is corrupt and has done abominable works. Jesus stated that man refuses to believe because his deeds are evil and he wants to hide them beneath a covering of darkness (*John 3:18-20*).

The question is what is in a name? Many in the world are trying to live up to some name. Most of you probably know what I am talking about. You may have even heard it. You are so and so; therefore, you need to do right by your name. And, yet what is in a name? In such cases as the above example, it is almost as if you fall into some vacuum. What determines how a name should be expressed in one's life to ensure that it is being presented in a proper way? No doubt there is reputation and association attached to names. For example, the name of Hitler definitely arouses some type of response in people, but in most instances a name is a name. It is generic because it is often faceless. It is insignificant because there are unknown dynamics to it that keep the person who is attached to it vague to those who are not personally acquainted with him or her. Such people may cross our path but they will always be standing outside the inner circle and functions of our life.

This brings us back to what is in a name. The idea of a name is to establish identity. A person who possesses a name is identified to family, to some type of roots, and status. A name distinguishes the existence of an individual. For example, the one thing I hear about my first name is that it is unusual or beautiful, but in our society, people's real association has to do with their last names, not their first name. I am associated with some unusual last names such as Meuleman and Bywater. In fact, if I hear these names, which I rarely do, I know I am related to that person in some way.

The other aspect of our names is that it is associated with our roots, where we came from. From my limited

understanding of my roots on my father's side, they go back to Belgium, but on my mother side it is a combination of a European mix, which probably is trumped by predominate English and possibly some Danish roots. Although genealogy is interesting, and no doubt ancestors have passed down genes that may in some way influence our likes and dislikes, our talents and preferences, it will not determine our character or final destination.

In America, the government has clearly changed the dynamics of people's identity. They have put American citizens under the Agriculture Department and simply given them a number (Social Security). This godless defining of people basically strips them of their personhood, identity, and roots making them a commodity that can be used, traded, and sold to the highest bidder. No doubt this fact may shock some people in America, but it is the harsh reality of a government that ceases to exist for the people and becomes an indifferent self-serving, tyrannical entity unto itself.

It is for the above reason that I am thankful for my citizenship in the kingdom of God. Names mean nothing in this present world and roots are easily severed by the claims of the world upon our souls. However, in the kingdom of God, our identity has been established by adoption in the highest court—that of heaven, and our roots go back to Calvary where they are forever grounded in redemption. As a result, as believers, we are taking on a new likeness, and in the end we will be given a new name that is only going to be known between the Lord and us. It is for this reason that I have concurred that no matter how great or unusual my present name is my heavenly citizenship has declared I have a new name, yet to be revealed.

This brings me to the name of God. Unlike people, God does not have to live up to some vague notion

about His name; rather His name describes Him. Could this also be true for the unknown, new name of believers? Will it describe them, their life and works? For God, His name is all inclusive, but yet it contains many different aspects, dimensions, and dynamics.

In the Jewish language, there are no vowels in the name attributed to the English name, "Jehovah" (LORD in Scripture). It is spelled "Yhwh," but along the way vowels were inserted in what I refer to as the silent spaces, and by doing so we have the word, "Yahweh." But think about the silent spaces in the Hebrew spelling of Yahweh. To me those spaces represent the unknown, mysterious aspects of God that cannot be defined by finite man or comprehended; therefore, they remain hidden from him. There is no way that we in our present condition can ever comprehend the fullness of God, let alone describe who He is and His ways in a just, deserving manner. On the other hand, the consonants in Yahweh graciously remind me that the Lord can be known because He is a person with a personality and identity.

Because God has a mysterious quality to His name, there are cults that make the sacredness of His name a matter of their worship rather than the actual person of God. They strive to get His name right, but fail to establish themselves in a growing productive relationship with Him. They want to major in the right pronunciation of His name, but they minor in studying the attributes that are attached to the various renditions of His name. They have zeal towards the name of God, but they are void of understanding Him in terms of mercy, grace, godliness, and righteousness. They are ever striving to gain a greater understanding of His name, but never actually come to a real solid knowledge of Him.

It is true that God's name is sacred, but its sacredness is not to create some mysterious cloud around the reality of God; rather, it is to create a right attitude towards God that will cause man to approach God in a worshipful way. God's name is not some secret word that ushers one into a clandestine society or group. He is not some vague concept, nor should He

be counted among the endless gods erected by man. He alone is the true God and the various aspects of His name speak of His nature, works, and ways. God has made Himself recognizable so that we can discern Him. He has made Himself available so we draw near to Him. He has let His name be known so that we can know Him.

The first name we come face with is the word "God." The actual word "God" points to deity, that which is divine in nature and all of His ways. "Divine" points to that which possesses a celestial, heavenly nature and is marvelous in His ways. In fact, the word "divine" places the one who possesses this stature above this earth.

However, wherever the name of "God" is placed and depending on how it is presented (all caps or lower case etc.) will determine the Jewish name that is attached to it. For example, the Jewish name attached to God in *Genesis 1:1* is Elohim. The "el" is the name for God in Hebrew. Good examples of "el" being used in words are Immanuel and Bethel. Immanuel means "El" GOD is with us. Bethel means house of "El" or house of GOD." There is also El Shaddai, GOD ALMIGHTY. (Note: The Companion Bible distinguishes "el" in the above usage with all caps, while other translations may have their own code as to properly identifying God according to His associations and works.) It is clear that whatever has been added or attached to His name will associate Him with His position or works. For instance, the name of God, Elohim, (lower case) in *Genesis 1:1* is strictly associated with His work of creation, and according to Bible Scholars, Elohim occurs 2,700 times in Scripture.

When you come to the presentation of the word "God" in lower case, and consider it in light of the text, you will see that the presentation of God is in relationship to His creation, which points to the name of Elohim, the One who created everything.

Clearly, the names of God are designed to bring about the right association with who He is and with His ways in order to create a right attitude and environment in which man is to approach Him. Because God is our creator, He deserves the proper recognition and respect from His creation.

Regardless of the world's attempt to mock, downplay, or deny that God is

Elohim, creator of all, *Romans 1:20* clearly states the contrary. We are told that creation declares the existence of its Creator, and due to such discoveries as DNA, many scientists have had to rethink what they have advocated and eat humble pie as they agree that creation speaks of an Intelligent Designer (ID).

There is much significance attached to God as our creator. When God created everything, He did so with a plan and order in mind. It is important for us to understand this plan. In the next article I am going to touch on this importance. However, my hope at this time is that each reader will come to terms with the importance that God existed in the beginning and was, and still exists in the present and is, and will continue to exist in the future. He is our Creator and He has a plan in mind for each of us.

As a born again, blood-bought saint, have you discovered your potential in the Lord? †

#### QUOTES BY DR. KEN HUTCHERSON (The Late Pastor "Hutch")

"Believing in heaven puts everything in proper perspective. It makes living here worry free, because whatever happens in the here and now, has a purpose but is a brief prelude to forever."

"Knowing that we have an eternity ahead of us that is perfect in all its aspects gives us the motivation and courage to do the things we know we need to do in order to experience the best in life."

"Believing in heaven gives focus to your life on earth. It sets your heart on the things that matter, deflecting those distractions that can prevent you from living the life you truly desire. Martin Luther once wrote that as far as he was concerned, only two days were important: today and the day he enters heaven. In other words, we don't have to worry about tomorrow because our future is certain. Knowing the truth liberates us to do what God wants us to do today, regardless of the cost. As Christians, we are to live as if today is the last day we have on earth."

## THE DANGER OF ADDING OR SUBTRACTING

Part Two – FIRE  
By Jeannette Haley

*“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of Devils.” - 1 Timothy 4:1*

For some strange reason many people seem to have been born with one goal in mind—to flirt with danger. Whether it is walking on a cable stretched across the Grand Canyon, snowboarding down a remote mountainside (accessible only by helicopter), surfing in shark-infested waters, photographing an erupting volcano up close, wrestling alligators, running with the bulls, or jumping out of planes, off cliffs, the world’s tallest building in Dubai, or what have you, I think (in my humble opinion) that they are all a bit nuts. Go ahead and call me a chicken, but I am one who believes that if you play with fire, sooner or later you are going to get burnt. Maybe that’s one reason I never smoked even one cigarette when some of the kids my age were trying it—I was totally convinced that if I lit a match or even a lighter I would catch on fire.

Fire is an important subject in God’s Word. There we learn about Satan’s fire, and God’s fire. One of the things we read about Satan’s lying wonders at the end of time is that he will do *“great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do...” Revelation 13:13, 14a.* Jesus warned that if it were possible, even the very elect would be deceived. (*Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22.*)

Jesus said in *Luke 12:49* that he [Jesus] came *“to send fire on the earth.”* *Jeremiah 23:29* says, *“Is not my word like as a fire? Saith the LORD: and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?”* Those who mess around with God’s Holy Word by adding to it, subtracting from it, twisting it, wresting it, using it out of context, reinterpreting it, misinterpret-

ing it, misdirecting it, misusing it, misrepresenting it, minimizing it, subverting it, perverting it, and mocking it are playing with a fire that will judge them in that day. Jesus said, *“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”* *John 12:48.* God’s Word is a powerful fire that purifies, refines, consumes, and judges, causing separation. *“But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap”* *Malachi 3:4.* The eyes of the Son of God are like *“unto a flame of fire”* *Revelation 1:14b; 2:18b; 19:12a.* Concerning the two witnesses of *Revelation 1:5*, *“And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.”* Yet, declaring to know all this, deceivers and wolves in sheep’s clothing still play with fire.

Concerning judgment, consider that the LORD rained brimstone and fire out of heaven upon the terrified, yet unrepentant people of Sodom and Gomorrah (*Genesis 19:24*). The judgment of fire also fell upon Nadab and Abihu, Aaron’s sons, for committing sacrilege when they offered strange fire before the LORD (*Leviticus 10:1-3*). The fire of the LORD burned the people who complained and displeased the Lord in the uttermost parts of the camp in Moses’ day (*Numbers 11:1*). Two-hundred and fifty men who were not of the sons of Aaron offered incense and were consumed by a fire from the LORD (*Numbers 16:35*). Fire came down from heaven at the word of Elijah, and consumed two companies of fifty men each (*2 Kings 1:10-12*). In spite of all this, Satan’s ministers continue to offer strange fire in the name of the Lord, deceiving and leading astray multitudes of souls.

God’s fire was involved in personal encounters with men. God met Moses in a burning bush (*Exodus 3:2*); He descended on Mount Sinai in fire (*Exodus 19:18*); fire came out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat, (*Leviticus 9:24*). Think about Abram’s sacrifice in *Genesis 15*, Elijah’s sacrifice in *1 Kings 18*, King David’s sacrifice in *1 Chronicles 21*, and Solomon’s

sacrifice in *2 Chronicles 7*. In each of these exciting accounts we read of the fire of God falling from heaven, consuming the offerings. In all of these events we get a picture of God’s holiness, power, majesty, glory and honor. The fire of God should cause us to fall on our faces, and worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

God’s fire will be an instrument of His divine judgment. *“In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”* *2 Thessalonians 1:8.* *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up”* *2 Peter 3:10.* *“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”* *Revelation 20:14, 15.* Those who ignore, refuse to trust and obey, despise and reject the Son of God not only play with fire, but they will be lost in the fires of judgment forever.

God’s fire is a purifier. *“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is”* *1 Corinthians 3:13.* *“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”* *1 Peter 1:7.* When the Prophet Isaiah had a mighty vision of the Lord and His power, glory and holiness he said in *Isaiah 6:5-7*, *“Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged”.* After Isaiah was purified, then the Lord spoke to him and gave him his commission. The question is have you had a personal encounter with the purifying fire of God?

The fire of God is a symbol of the divine presence and power. "Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire" Deuteronomy 4:36. "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people" Psalm 50:3, 4. "A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about" Psalm 97:3. "For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many" Isaiah 66: 15, 16.

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire" Hebrews 12:25-29. Knowing that our God is a consuming fire should strike holy fear into the hearts of all those who become "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ" 2 Corinthians 11:13b. Yet, they foolishly continue playing with fire, wresting the scriptures to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16) while offering "strange fire" to God that will doom them to eternal damnation.

John the Baptist talked of the fire that the Son of God would baptize His followers with. In Matthew 3:11, we read, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and

with fire." After Jesus' ascension, He indeed baptized them with fire. "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" Acts 2, 3. Therefore, knowing all these things, how reverent, fearful, and diligent should we be in our approach to God's Holy Word? "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" 2 Timothy 2:15. This means to rightly handle and skillfully teach the Word, knowing how to discern the intent, spirit, principles, and precepts, connect topics, and understand the context. Anybody can take a verse out of context, misinterpret it, and establish a cult. Christians need to be continually on guard against the "wind of doctrines" that is blowing through the earth in these last days. (See Ephesians 4:11-16.)

One night in April, 1995, at about 3:00 a.m. in Everett, Washington, I had a terrifying dream. (That very same night, a friend's daughter had a parallel dream in Phoenix, Arizona, which I will reveal at the conclusion of the interpretation of this dream.)

In my dream, I was oil painting outdoors with a friend. I happened to look towards one of the volcanic Cascade Mountains and saw a little puff of smoke. I said to her, "Look at the mountain. There's smoke coming from it." She didn't seem concerned. I kept painting while she watched me paint. Again, I looked over at the mountain, and this time there was a greater amount of smoke. As before, I directed her attention towards it, and then resumed painting.

The third time I looked up at the mountain there were great billowing clouds of gray smoke and ash spewing forth in a continuous and increasing volume. Then I began to hear people screaming, and while staring in horror at the erupting mountain I became aware of multitudes of people running and screaming. They were streaming away from the mountain and running in our direction. As they came closer I saw them, one by one, bursting into flames. Their screams were horrifying, and terrible. I shall never forget it.

Meanwhile, a few firemen ap-

peared with fire hoses and began hosing off the burning people one at a time. As soon as one person's fire was put out, the firemen would turn their hose on another person, but, just as quickly, the person whose fire had been extinguished burst into flames again, and they resumed screaming.

I turned and ran backwards a little ways and put my hands on the ground. I felt it shaking, and felt heat from underground fire beginning to break through. All I could do was yell to my companion to run. I woke with my heart pounding and the hideous screaming of the people ringing in my ears. It was vivid and real.

Interpretation: I believe there is much more to this dream than space will allow at this time, but briefly here are some of my understandings of this horrible revelation: There were three distinct warnings that tragedy was about to strike, but the people didn't take it seriously. By the time everything broke loose, it was too late. The terror and suffering of the multitudes was incomprehensible, and speaks of the end times Jesus warned about in Matthew 24. The firemen represent God's faithful remnant that are doing their best to help the people, but they were too few and too late.

Often prophecies and visions have double or even triple fulfillments and, in part, I have seen numerous instances in which the fire was heretical and erroneous doctrines destroying the souls of people. The firemen were the few watchmen who still stand for the truth as once delivered to the saints, and they were contending for sound doctrine. (Jude 3). Through the years of ministry I have witnessed people being set free from doctrines of demons, only to be swayed by other heretical teachings, thereby "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." (Ephesians 4:14).

My friend's daughter, who lived in Phoenix, Arizona, dreamed a like dream that very same night. It went like this: She, her husband and her mother were asleep in their apartment when suddenly the building was engulfed in flames. People were

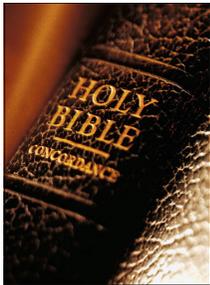
running and screaming and bursting into flames. A Catholic priest came with a squirt gun and unsuccessfully tried to put the fire out, one person at a time. She tried in vain to wake up her sleeping husband, but her mother did awake and they both managed to escape the inferno.

At this point, she related that she sat straight up in bed, screaming in terror at the reality of this dream. She, too, will never forget the sound of those screaming people.

Through the years, Rayola and I have seen wave after wave of "strange fire" movements within Christendom. They all have a common source—the master of deception, the enemy of God, and the deceiver of all mankind, which is Satan. Every heretical fire that sweeps through the Christian community, and there have been and are many, appeals to certain aspects of people's fallen condition, whether it be religious pride, self-love, rebellion against the truth, or unbelief. Rayola summed it up well when she said, "People are not satisfied because they are not walking it (the Word) out in their life. They are always looking for something else, and because they don't walk it out they don't have the goods."

In Part three of this series we will look at some of the major winds of doctrines that have swept multitudes into a sea of deception and despair. In the meantime, may we all be like the Bereans of Acts

17:11 who "were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." †



*"And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." - Luke 1:30-33*

## COMMENTS

"It is not easy to face our depravity especially when God puts the search light on our heart, motives, attitudes, disposition and priorities. . . . we must take accountability for our own actions and we must look at how God looks at it not man and choose to line up with the most excellent way and set an example." - ID

"It is very disheartening to go to church and hear someone in a position of spiritual authority and leadership, say something completely unscriptural. Especially when it is the pastor." VA

"You and Rayola have so much to do with church and the newsletters, books, etc. I LOVE Rayola's new series in the newsletter. I can't wait for the next one to come out and your last article was amazing, I love how you put the truth in black and white and back it up with scriptural truths so those who would argue have nothing left to argue, it's there in scripture, they can't dispute it!" - ID

"You've GOT to know how very much I appreciated your article, especially the JDS [Jesus Died Spiritually] heresy!!! Think about it; if The Perfect One had to be "born again" (in hell no less!!!!) what hope do I have as a sinner???????? The whole WOF [Word of Faith] is a can of heresy, and they are roping people into their own hell on a daily basis!! Your ministry is so UNDER-appreciated! But God knows.....and sees!!! - FL

"Did some checking and I wanted to insure everything my sister writes about is right-on! And it was of course. I love supporting you when things are questioned what you write. Makes me dig." - ID

"You gals always go ABOVE AND BEYOND to reach out to the LOST in whatever capacity you are able to make an eternal difference. It has nothing to do with family, friends, parties and show and smack." - ID

"I find it kind of amazing to watch God use a scattered handful of people all across the internet, doing their own little bit, and sifting us in such a way as to separate the ones who are onto the truth, from the ones who are in it just for sensationalism and the attention it brings them. One thing the truth-tellers have in common is a small but loyal following." - VA

## QUOTABLES

"More often than we probably realize, apostasy has its roots in moral failure." - William MacDonald

"The truth that's told with bad intent beats all the lies you can invent." - William Blake

"But perhaps you have no taste for this despised Book: perhaps plays, romances, and the books of polite entertainment suit your taste better; if this is your case, give me leave to tell you, your taste is vitiated, and unless corrected by the Spirit and Word of God, you shall never enter into his heavenly kingdom: for unless you delight in God here, how will you be made meet to dwell with him hereafter?" - George Whitefield

"Discerning error in the midst of great deception in these present days is the gravest of all challenges in Christendom. The greatest attack has always been directed at the truth and intent of the Word of God. There are three ways in which error can occur when it comes to the Word of God. People can err in how they handle it. This means they are handling the truth in unrighteousness according to some other unacceptable agenda. They can err in their interpretation of the Word. In essence, they can adjust it to their own view of a matter. Finally, they can err in their attitude towards it. This simply means they do not perceive it to be the final, infallible authority of God. They do not tremble before it nor do they see it as being absolute in what has been said and established as truth." – Rayola Kelley

"There is a subtle deception that attending meetings, conferences, and seminars is doing the work of God. We listen to messages and talk about what we know we should be doing, and the delusion creeps over us that we are accomplishing His will. What we are actually doing is increasing our responsibility and deceiving ourselves. We deceive ourselves that we are spiritual when actually we might be quite carnal. We deceive ourselves that we are growing, when the truth is that we are stagnant. We deceive ourselves that we are wise when we are pathetically foolish." - William MacDonald

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Galatians 5:25

## RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

### GIVE THANKS IN EVERYTHING?

**Q:** *I know we have just celebrated Thanksgiving but I was wondering if you could explain 1 Thessalonians 5:18, where it says it is the will of God to give thanks in everything. I admit I am not always thankful for what is going on in my Christian life and often struggle with guilt and a sense of failure.*

**A:** You are not the only one who struggles with this aspect of the Christian life. As believers, it is our heart to have the right attitude towards God. However, we have a tendency to look at what is wrong and fail to see what is right. It takes much discipline to adjust our attitude towards God and His ways when it comes to thankfulness.

Since the Bible is clear that ingratitude towards God and His ways will not be tolerated, it is important to understand what ingratitude is saying to God. Deuteronomy 28:47-48 gives us this insight, *"Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things; and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee."*

God has called us into a life of service through worship and godly conduct and acts. He has clearly provided all that we need to tap into the abundance of His goodness. To follow, serve, obey, and worship God should bring the greatest pleasure to our life, but sadly we can quickly succumb to an ungrateful spirit if our heart is wrong and our attitude self-centered.

For example, we can see ingratitude in the case of the children of Israel when it came to honoring and serving the Lord. In one situation they murmured about God's provision and in another incident they grumbled about the hard way He was bringing them to the Promised Land (*Numbers 11; 21:4-9*). In the first situation, many died of a plague and in the other God sent serpents among them to judge

them.

So what does it mean to be thankful? True thankfulness comes out of a grateful heart, trusting attitude, and a humble spirit. Such thankfulness is the will of God because in spite of whatever is going on in one's life, He is worthy of receiving thanksgiving. This brings us to a very important point, to be thankful in everything does not mean we are thankful for the challenging circumstances; rather, it means that we are thankful to God for He is who He is in all that He does, and we are thankful for God because He is able to get you through the different challenges of life.

The problem with the children of Israel, as well as with some in the Christian realm, was that they murmured against God's provision because they were lusting after the things of the world. This was an utter show of contempt towards His provision of manna. In the second situation, they were grumbling, because they did not trust God to know and work out the way in which they needed to travel in order to possess the Promised Land. They were ready to rebel against His way, instead of going on in confidence to possess the promise of God. In this scenario they were questioning God's way and despising Him for it, putting Him to a foolish test. In both cases we see that the children of Israel's thankfulness was conditional; therefore, not a matter of the heart. Their attitude was fleshly and their spirit rebellious.

When it comes to thankfulness for Christians in regard to God, it must be present in two arenas, the first one is prayer. *Philippians 4:25* tells us that in thanksgiving we need to make all prayers and supplications known to the Lord. If our prayers and supplications are going to be effective, they must be offered in the spirit of thankfulness, knowing that God alone will provide the answer to those prayers according to His will (*1 John 5:14*). However, the test of thankfulness will come after He answers our prayers. We can easily murmur against Him because He has not answered a particular prayer in the way we think He should.

The final arena that thanksgiving must be present is in sacrifice. The Bible talks about offering spiritual sacrifices in *1 Peter 1:5*. *Hebrews 13:15* tells us that one of our sacrifices needs to be that of praise. All sacrifices of

praise can only be offered on the currents of thanksgiving. The test here is if we do not possess the right heart in which to lift up our praise, the right attitude to give it flight, and the right



spirit to allow it to soar to the very heights of God, our praise will never enter into heaven and alight upon the throne of God in utter adoration and wor-

## WORDS OF WISDOM

By Marvin J. Rosenthal

"By definition, 'righteousness' is the product of 'rightness,' and 'rightness' is conformity to a standard or norm. In the Bible, the standard or norm of 'rightness' is the will of God, which is simply an expression of God's nature and character.

"By way of contrast, humanism substitutes humanity's opinion of what is right or wrong in place of God's revelation of what is right or wrong. Our hour of history is not unlike the days of the judges in ancient Israel when every individual did that which was right in his or her own eyes. When human beings become the final arbiters, everything becomes subjective. There is no platinum yardstick or measuring rod. When there is no acknowledged norm or standard, there is no absolute by which to measure the issues of life.

"However, the divine standard exists whether acknowledged or not, and men and women seek either to adhere to God's standards or live in sin and disobedience to their Creator and Sovereign. Any of the problems that now divide our country are not, in an ultimate sense, political or even moral. They are spiritual. The issue comes down to the belief in a holy God who has revealed His will and to whom men are accountable, or the belief in humanism which ultimately says of humanity, 'I am the captain of my ship; I am the master of my fate.'"  
—Zion's Fire, Vol. 25 No. 1, pg. 5

*"Human rights can only be assured among a virtuous people."*  
—George Washington

## OUT OF THIS LIFE

Out of this life I shall never take  
Things of silver and gold I make  
All that I cherish and hoard away  
After I leave, on this earth must stay.

Tho' I have toiled for a painting rare  
To hang on the wall, I must leave it  
there.  
Though I called it mine, and boast its  
worth,  
I must give it up when I leave this  
earth.

All that I gather, and all that I keep,  
I must leave behind when I fall asleep.  
And I often wonder what I shall own  
In that other life, when I pass alone.

What shall they find, and what  
Shall they see, in the soul that  
Answers the call for me?

Shall the Great Judge learn,  
When my task is through  
That my spirit has gained some riches,  
too?

Or shall, at last, it be mine to find  
That all I'd worked for I'd left behind?

—Author Unknown

## GOD'S WORD

"Here are some general thoughts about God's Word that relate to all of mankind: without the Bible, humanity would be nearly clueless about God; without the Bible, people would be completely deluded about their moral condition: without the Bible, humanity would have no idea what its purpose might be; without the Bible, mankind is lost in a condition of hopelessness and worse. For Christians, however, if we are not serious about the Word of God, we may still be semi-clueless about God, about our moral condition, about our purpose in God's plan (or clueless about the plan itself), and ill-equipped to deal with the problems of life. In fact, we may struggle as much as nonbelievers. So, what we think about the Bible and what we do about it are very important concerns.

"Without God's Word, His direct communication to His rational creatures, we have only man's opinions, speculations, and guesses about God, not to mention the lies introduced by God's chief adversary, Satan."  
T. A. McMahon, *The Berean Call*

## GREAT IS THE MYSTERY

By Dave Hunt

The solution to evil through the incarnation is . . . a mystery: "...great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tm 3:16).

"*God was manifest in the flesh.*" What a mystery! God could become a fetus in Mary's womb? John the Baptist as a 6-month-old fetus leapt in the womb of Elizabeth in recognition that Mary was pregnant with the Messiah. Amazing!

"*Seen of angels.*" These heavenly beings must have watched in astonishment. The One whom they had known as God the Son, one with the Father, for at least 4,000 years by earth time (we know not how much earlier angels were created), was growing in the virgin Mary's womb, soon to be born a babe needing a mother's milk and care—truly man, yet at the same time truly God. Mystery of mysteries!

"*Believed on in the world.*" The Apostle John speaks in awe of this One whom "we have heard...seen with our eyes...looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us)" (1 Jn:1:1,2). In his Gospel John says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (Jn:1:14).

Yes, "*Believed on in the world.*" Certainly John believed, as did Paul, that Jesus the Messiah of Israel was truly "God manifest in the flesh." To be a Christian one must believe that Jesus Christ is God come as a man to redeem us. What love to come from so high to stoop so low—to be rejected, hated, misunderstood, mocked, maligned, stripped, scourged, and crucified by those He came to redeem!

"*Received up into glory.*" His sacrifice accepted by the Father, He is glorified at the Father's right hand and interceding there for us (Rom:8:34). But even before that great meeting in His presence in the Father's house, "beholding as in a glass the glory of

the Lord, [we] are changed into the same image...by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor:3:18).

Surely if the incarnation is the great mystery of godliness, then for us to live godly lives we must have Christ dwelling within us and living His life through us: "Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach..." (Col:1:27, 28). This is the "hope of his calling" which Paul prayed that the Ephesian saints would understand. Peter explains that God "hath called us unto his eternal glory" (1 Pt 5:10). We are going to be like Christ. The glory that the disciples beheld in Christ will be manifested in us!

We are transformed by His Word, the Word of Truth upon which we feed for spiritual nourishment. The written instructions which God spoke into DNA and which are essential for physical life present a powerful picture of the "words that...are spirit, and...life" (Jn:6:63). This is the living Word of God which when believed (1 Pt 1:23-25) creates and nourishes spiritual life. (Excerpted from *The Berean Call September 2014*)



## CHRISTMAS QUOTES

"Christmas can be celebrated in the school room with pine trees, tinsel and reindeers, but there must be no mention of the man whose birthday is being celebrated. One wonders how a teacher would answer if a student asked why it was called Christmas."  
- Ronald Reagan

"How many observe Christ's birthday!  
How few, His precepts!" - Benjamin Franklin

## THE BIBLE—GOD'S HOLY BOOK

This Book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers.

Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions immutable.

This Book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers.

Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions immutable.

Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.

It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.

It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter.

Christ is its subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end.

It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.

Read it slowly, frequently and prayerfully.

It is given to you in life, will be open in the judgment, and be remembered forever.

It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labor, and condemns all who trifle with its holy precepts. - Author Unknown

*"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." - Matthew 24:35*

## MERRY CHRISTMAS

**THANK YOU ONE AND ALL  
FOR YOUR FRIENDSHIP,  
PRAYERS, AND SUPPORT.  
MAY GOD BLESS YOU AND  
KEEP YOU ALWAYS!**

**Rayola Kelley, Jeannette Haley,  
Krista Dinatale, Carrie Seaney**

## THE WORD OF GOD Quotes by A. W. Tozer

Go to God's Word and you will find that sin is the most pressing, the most compelling, the most imperative problem in human life and society. The most pressing problem is not sickness. It is not war. It is not poverty. Sin is the basic problem because sin has to do with a person's soul. Sin does not relate merely to a person's short years on this earth. It involves that person's eternal future and the world to come. ~ A.W. Tozer, *Jesus, Our Man in Glory*, 74

None of us can ever be fully pleasing to God if we are not willing to be well taught in His Word. ~ A.W. Tozer, *Jesus, Our Man in Glory*, 104

God's words are not for me to edit and tinker with, but to believe and obey. ~ A.W. Tozer, *Experiencing God's Presence*

Regarding God's Word, let us love it and live in it and eat it and drink it and lie down on it and walk on it and stand on it and swear by it and live by it and rest in it. ~ A.W. Tozer, *Experiencing God's Presence*, 105

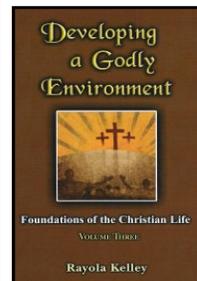
I have always felt that when we read and study the Word of God we should have great expectations. We should ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the Person, the glory and the eternal ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps our problem is in our approach. Perhaps we have simply read our Bibles as we might read a piece of literature or a textbook. ~ A.W. Tozer, *Jesus, Our Man in Glory*, 17

The difficulty we modern Christians face is not misunderstanding the Bible, but persuading our untamed hearts to accept its plain instructions. Our problem is to get the consent of our world-loving minds to make Jesus Lord in fact as well as in word. ~ A.W. Tozer, *God's Pursuit of Man*, 120

The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His Presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts. - A.W. Tozer

## DEVELOPING A GODLY ENVIRONMENT

Foundations of the Christian Life  
Volume Three  
By Rayola Kelley



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