

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

Everyone has had the experience of being misunderstood, as well as having misunderstood someone else. Accurately communicating our exact thoughts and feelings isn't always an easy thing to do. When is the last time you were misunderstood?

This process of accurately conveying the thoughts of the mind and intent of the heart has lent itself to the writing of many books. For instance, simply consider the difficulty of this process when it comes to men and women. A few years ago a book entitled "Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus" was published and addressed many of the communication problems between the sexes.

Now add a difference in language to this scenario. The translation of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek into other languages presents problems when it comes to accurately conveying the truth of God and is also part of the reasons for today's religious confusion.

Having an awareness of the magnitude of such a task to communicate the truth of God should put us in greater awe of how this is accomplished in the Church. If brethren truly understood what is being discussed in this article, then there would be the potential for far greater unity and harmony within the Church.

Do you deeply understand how God's people become one-minded, not misunderstanding what is being given concerning the things of God? As we continue to experience more troubles and trials, I am more in awe of how God communicates His word to us. How do you know what is true and what is false? How do you know that you accurately and truthfully understand what God's word is saying to His Church? Do you know how God communicates His written word to you?

More and more it is becoming painfully clear to me how very

difficult it is to convey one's thoughts and intent, especially in matters concerning the Church. Recently this problem became magnified even more as I listened to a sermon given by a minister in one of the larger scattered groups who was trying to warn brethren against the evils of many of the things I have written, especially in the booklet "Time Is Running Out." I certainly do not find any fault with a minister warning a congregation about those things that are false and harmful to the Body of Christ. I have done a great deal of that myself, especially in these times of continuing apostasy within the Church.

Over and over again in recent years brethren have had to address this kind of uncomfortable situation within the environment of the Church, where ministers have been at odds with one another. When this happens, it often means brethren have to make choices between what different ministers are claiming comes from God. Ministers, who at one time spoke the same thing and were joined together in fellowship in a single organization, are now in the position of finding themselves in stark disagreement with each another. This has caused great confusion within the Church. How do you know who is right? How do you know what is true and what is false?

Not Handled Well

Judging this kind of problem has not been handled very well by brethren nor the ministry. This inability or refusal to make a distinction between conflicting teachings from different ministers is a primary reason so many brethren have become spiritually weak and why so many have gone by the way side. Yet brethren are held accountable for what they choose to eat (spiritually) and who they decide should feed them.

The best explanation for why this process has been so difficult for brethren to address appears to lie within a kind of mystic that people seem to hold toward someone just because he is called a minister. Yet Paul amply warns within the Church, "*And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith*" (2 Thes 3:2, KJV).

Paul's words are more about the ministry than they are about the rest of the Church. Our experience of the past 15 years should cry out to us that "not all ministers have the faith."

Just because a minister or any member of the Body of Christ begins his spiritual life **in** the truth and is able to converse with others **in** the truth does not mean he will remain faithful **to** the truth. I have known many ministers who gave very moving and inspiring sermons that were rich in the truth and some who have written inspiring articles that were also filled with truth, yet they eventually made choices that cut them off from the source of true inspiration. When that happens—when a minister is cut off from God's spirit—his life begins to be filled with deceit and hypocrisy. He may speak about the truth and have truth in much of what he says, but he is no longer **in** the truth. For many, this can become a very difficult matter to judge, but judge, we must!

Confusion is not of God. All that proceeds from the word of God is sound and there is no contradiction in what He speaks to us. The stronger we are as God's people the more our words and actions will reflect unity and harmony with the word of God. In such cases, ministers will be in greater harmony and unity of word and understanding. But that is not the case today. Instead, we are witnessing a continuing movement in the opposite direction—away from God.

The effects of this problem had its greatest impact upon me nearly four years ago when I was a minister in the UCG,IA. I had traveled to Kansas to perform the funeral of my father, and while there, I met a woman whom I had known since she was a young girl, when I first came into the Church. She came up to me and told me she was having some difficulty understanding the timing of the Passover. Her husband had been studying into some other ideas on the subject and was now of the belief that it should be observed at the same time the Jews kept it, on the 15th of Nissan.

When I returned home, it came as quite a shock to me to learn that this minister had confirmed the Jewish belief to her and turned her farther away from the truth, rather than reinforcing the truth in her mind. Immediately I made a phone call to the minister and found that we indeed had different beliefs about the timing of Passover. He believed the Jews had the correct understanding of Passover events running late on the 14th and into the early hours of the 15th of Nissan. Certainly this did not agree with the teaching of the Church of God which Mr. Armstrong had restored very early on in his ministry.

Even more incredible, this minister faxed me a whole list of scriptures that he believed proved his point. Astoundingly, these are the exact same scriptures I would have sent to him to show the truth about an evening, 14th Passover. How could two ministers in the same organization teach a doctrine so opposite to each other? In this situation, any member judging us as ministers would not have many choices to make. Either one of us was right and the other wrong, or we were both wrong. At least one had to be false, and teaching a false doctrine.

Can such a false teaching about a 14/15th Passover come from a true minister of God? The answer should be quite obvious, but for too many it hasn't. Indeed, "not all men have faith."

Not All Believe

The expression from Paul, "for all men have not faith," is one that needs to be focused upon by more of the brethren. Refusal to do so can carry some very dire consequences.

If we make some comparisons with the Protestant world, perhaps we could begin to recognize some dangerous similarities with some of the things that are occurring within the Church. Since there are so many conflicting doctrines between Protestant churches, it isn't hard to grasp that not all of them could be right. Each has a different faith they live by, because their beliefs are different. They may agree on Christmas, Easter and Sunday worship, but apart from that, it doesn't take long before there is disagreement.

In Protestant churches, people choose the specific church of their choice, one that more fully agrees with their own beliefs or likes. We need to see that this is exactly what much of the scattered Church is doing.

Since we have been given so much truth, it makes it quite easy for us to see the flaws of false teachings in the world around us. But possessing truth does not make us **of** the truth. When the Israelites were given truth, it did not mean they were **of** the truth.

If brethren can grasp some of the simplest principles that produce the confusion in the Protestant world, then we should be able to more fully grasp the problem that exists in the environs of the Church of God. Brethren and ministers alike may have the Holy Days and weekly Sabbath in common and possess much of the truth of God, but not be **in** the truth of God. This seems to confuse some people. Many ministers may outwardly appear to be the same because they preach during the Sabbath and Holy Days, but this does not mean that they are **in** the truth and that the truth is **in** them. Just because someone is in a Church of God environment, it does not make them true—not true members and not true ministers—even though they may have been true at one time.

The minister who taught my friend the false teaching that the 14/15th Passover is true, is himself false. Ministers can be very sincere to those they teach, but be sincerely wrong! Protestant ministers can be ever so sincere in what they teach, but they are wrong. They may have a real concern for others in the congregation, but that concern does not come from the spirit of God. Many protestant ministers are very sincere about what they do and what they teach, and they can have great concern for those in their congregation, but such outward appearances can be very deceptive, even within the Church. That is one of the reasons why Jesus told us not to judge from outward appearances.

A minister should be judged by whether or not he is **in** the truth and not by how much you may like him, how well he speaks, how sincere he may appear, or even by how many good things he does for the congregation. Even protestant ministers can do those things, but they are not **in** the truth. That is why Paul said, "*And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*" (1 Cor. 2:4-5, KJV). !!!

In the last issue of New Watch, a number of discrepancies in foundational teachings among ministers were pointed out. Not every minister who was mentioned there can be true. If all of us as ministers in the scattered Church (in Worldwide and those scattered out of her) were brought together before God and asked some specific questions about what we believe, it would be painfully obvious that everyone could not be **of** the truth or **in** the truth. That means that many would be proven to be FALSE!!! But who? That is the task before us. Brethren must seek to hold to what is true, especially within the ministry—those **of** the truth and **in** the truth. Anything less is spiritual suicide.

Not every minister in the scattered Church holds to the same foundational teachings, not all believe the same thing, and not all have the faith. If any brethren make a choice to be taught by someone who has moved away from the trunk of the tree, then they have chosen to be fed by a false teacher and to eat unclean spiritual food which can kill! Yet hundreds, even thousands of brethren, who at one time were in unity and harmony with God, are now doing that very thing—electing to be taught by false ministers. These false choices move brethren away from continuing among the chosen, the elect.

When you read the numerous warnings and prophecies about false teachers, it would be wise to wake up to the reality that these warnings and prophecies culminate and come to a great climax during these end-times in which we are now living. This is not about what is obvious among ministers in the religious world around us, but about that which is seemingly not so obvious about ministers in the scattered Church.

How do you know what is right or who is right? There has always been one way and one way alone to know. Everybody "thinks" they are right, but only one thing can make you right. Only God can lead you to the truth and only God can keep you IN the truth. You cannot keep your self in the truth. Your ability to discern what is true and who is true is dependant upon your relationship with God and the power of His spirit that gives and sustains all that is true.

Such basic understanding of how we **can be in** the faith and **continue in** the faith is why the words of Jesus Christ are so simple and sure. Jesus said, *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."* (John 10:27, KJV). Telltale signs appear when someone moves away from the trunk of the tree and follows false teaching.

The difficult reality before the Church is that all of us in the ministry do not have the faith, not all believe

the same thing. Yes, there will always be some differences, but not in the primary doctrines that are foundational, the trunk of the tree. Not all are holding fast to the truth God first revealed to us. Not all are growing spiritually or working truthfully with the realities that have been confronting the Church. Am I trying to tear down someone or some organization by saying such things? NO! Why do some get so mad at what I'm saying? It is because human nature does not like the truth. If we love the truth, there is great reason for it. In such cases we will not be offended, and we will receive truth gladly, even when it hurts our human nature. The process of turning from pride toward humility always leads to meaningful repentance so that we can come into greater unity and harmony with our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father. That is when we can more clearly hear His Word and truly understand it.

Yes, our ability to know what is true and our ability to continue in what is true is dependant upon our relationship with God. His spirit at work within us is what gives us the ability to hear the words of God and to **know** what is true. (1 Corinthians 2)

What Is Your Focus?

Asking and answering the question "How do you know?" should better equip us to understand the work of God. This article lends itself to clarification on some misperceptions of things I have stated concerning some of the different organizations. Neither News Watch nor the booklet "Time Is Running Out" tries to comprehensively expound on any given subject. Instead, sermons are offered that delve more deeply into the material that is covered. Things written in these publications are geared toward whetting the spiritual appetite of brethren so they will dig deeper into the Word of God so they can better address the realities that affect the scattered Church today.

These publications have made statements about the work of God and what our focus should be in these times, given the condition of the Church. The perception of such statements will vary according to each individual's focus of what the work of God is, such focus being determined by what we believe.

As an example, if we believe that most of the Church has fallen away, then we will focus more fully on holding fast to the truth that God first delivered to us, understanding the present danger from those who seek to deceive others once they begin to fall away. We will come to more deeply appreciate that our ability to understand the truth, from the beginning, was given to us by God. This is why I recently went through a series of sermons talking about the power to bind and loose within the Church, trying to help brethren understand that various judgments within the Church may change from one time to another, but that no such power exists when it comes to the foundational truths that God gives to us. No such power of judgment exists when it comes to the timing of Passover or Pentecost. The power to bind and loose does not include any right to do away with things like tithing, government, the calendar which we have always used for the timing of Holy Days, or other foundational truths.

If we believe that we are living in the time of the great apostasy spoken of in 2 Thes.2, we will more fully grasp the importance of what God did through Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong in restoring foundational, trunk-of-the-tree truths to the Church during the period of Philadelphia. Most of these truths had been lost by the end of Sardis. Again, we are speaking of very basic truth that is necessary for salvation. If we believe these things were restored and accomplished by God, as the work of God, then our focus will not be one of tearing down

what God gave, but it will be one of upholding that truth.

Some have misunderstood, sometimes with anger, when I have mentioned that Philadelphia is over and the "work" that was given to Mr. Armstrong is also over. Certainly a large portion of the Church was called during that period and all should hold fast to the truth revealed during that time, as well as holding fast to all that was good during that time. But the specific work during Philadelphia was completed. Foundational truth necessary for salvation was replenished through the Elijah that would *"truly first come, and restore all things"* before the end of this age and the return of Jesus Christ (Mat.17:11). If you believe these things, your focus is going to be much different from someone who believes we are still living in Philadelphia and that Laodicea is yet to come. Your focus will be different from someone who believes that Mr. Armstrong was not "the Elijah to come."

Believing that a specific work given to Mr. Armstrong is over, does not mean we do not have work to do. Some seem to misunderstand such an obvious point, but the work that you think should be done will be based upon what you believe. Your focus will be different from quite a few others if you believe that what was given to Mr. Armstrong and the Philadelphian Church to accomplish concerning restoration of the truth was accomplished back then. Your focus will also be quite different from others who believe the gospel must yet be preached in all the world **as a witness**, if you believe "that witness" has already been given. Please understand, this does not mean that the gospel should no longer be preached in the world, but how you focus and then work at such a task will be based on what you believe.

If you do not believe the Church is living through the period of time mentioned in 2 Thes.2 concerning the "great falling away" (Gk - apostasy),

then your focus will be different from those who do believe it. Your focus will vary on how to care for the Church and what the Church needs. Some of these matters being mentioned are the very problems that some in the ministry have not addressed.

" And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Mat 24:14, KJV).

If I say that Mr. Armstrong and the Philadelphian Church accomplished this, then have I said I do not believe in the gospel being preached? On the contrary, more than ever the gospel needs to be preached. What is the gospel? It is the good news of the coming Kingdom of God.

If you believe that we are in the end-time and that we are nearing the great physical tribulation that is to come upon all the earth, then your focus for the work of God as it applies to the world or how it applies to the Church will be very much about preaching the gospel, the good news of the soon coming Kingdom of God. The way the gospel is preached in this world, to this world, or to the Church has everything to do with your focus and what you believe.

Issues that need to be resolved within the scattered Church should be more squarely focused upon, considering deeply what we believe to be true concerning this time in which we now live. A telecast or broadcast is not wrong to have, on the contrary, they have the potential to do much good in serving God, especially in serving God's people, and so can a magazine and other written material.

How do you know what is best? How do you know what to do? How do you know what is right? ...How do you know?

If we desire to know, we must seek to be genuine. We must seek to be true. We must seek humility in serving our God. We must seek repentance and mercy from God. We must cry out

for God to lead us and dwell in us. All the arguments and reasoning in the world as well as all things said or written are valuable only to the degree that God's spirit and presence are there. Either we are of God—in the truth and have faith—or we are not.

As uncomfortable as it may be, you and you alone are to judge such things, because your judgments rest upon you. The responsibility belongs to no other.

God's Kingdom is coming, sooner than some may believe, and we must be making ourselves ready. If you believe the gospel being preached "in all the world as a witness" hasn't been accomplished as a work that God did through Mr. Armstrong, then your focus will not be as urgent for preparing the Church for the soon-coming return of Jesus Christ. Whether it is in sermons, magazines or printed material, broadcasts or telecasts, the material they contain will have a much different focus from someone who believes "that witness" in Matthew 24 has already been given and that we have entered the end of the "end-times."

The content of such media will become even stronger and more keenly focused if you believe we are still living through and nearing the end of an apostasy that was prophesied to come just before the return of Jesus Christ. Add even more intensity and sense of urgency if you believe we have been spewed out of God's mouth as His people and scattered throughout this world. Such a belief would lead to stronger messages in all media that we needed to seek repentance and become more zealous to God as we rapidly approach the time when the good news of the Kingdom of God is about to be ushered in on this earth.

As Mr. Armstrong pointed out toward the end of his ministry, one of the most important things that needed to be focused upon and worked upon was the Church being made ready for the return of Jesus Christ. If we believe that and draw closer to God, our focus will be keen indeed!