

Rom. 14:19
So then let
us follow
after things
which make
for peace,
and things
whereby
we may
edify one
another.

John 8:32 And
ye shall know
the truth and
the truth shall
make you free.

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THE WISDOM OF GOD

by Jim Stauffer

When you read **Psalm 119:97-104** there are at least four things you learn from the Law of God that will lead you to think differently than the majority of the world. Four things that will lead you to conduct your life in a manner uniquely opposed to worldly thought.

First, His word makes me wiser than my enemies:

In **1 Pet. 5:8** the inspired writer tells me Satan is my adversary and he prowls around seeking to devour someone, anyone, yes, even me. When the apostle Paul tells us to put on the whole armor of God, he explains the reason. He says, *Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.* (**Eph. 6:11**) Worldly wisdom would suggest we need to look at all things in life equally in order to find what is most suitable to us as an individual. God's word tells me I have enemies and need to be prepared to deal with them. Bear in mind, the schemes of the devil may involve using family or friends to lure me into thoughts and deeds in which he would have me participate. This is why Jesus taught us to follow Him instead of family and friends (**Matt. 10:37-39**).

Second, I have more insight than my teachers

There is probably no group of people on the earth we are encouraged to listen to more than our educators. Our teachers have spent much time in the study of the subject of their special attention. Therefore, we are told they know more about it than anyone else we could find. In one sense this is an accurate assessment. The weakness of our teachers compared to the Law of the Lord is, they are targets of our adversary, Satan, just as we are. One of the problems young people have today is succumbing to the influence of well respected educators. When they do, they accept more from them than just the expertise they possess in their field of secular education. A result of this is many young people today have formed their thoughts and ideas about God based on what a Professor at some college has told them. God tells us His Word can overcome this.

It will teach us things those with worldly wisdom do not understand and accept. It will give us understanding above and beyond our teachers. We should never accept the word of any man over the word of God.

Third, it gives me understanding beyond the aged

Now we have always been taught to respect our elders and listen to them and soak up the wisdom they have gained from experience. This passage is not intending to overturn that piece of advice. It is simply stating God has greater wisdom than all the great minds on earth, whether they be teachers or wise men with great age and experience. It is God's word that gives me the understanding my Creator desires for me. Elihu told Job, ...*it is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding* (**Job 32:7,8**) rather than age and the wisdom it brings. We need to put things in perspective, *The LORD by wisdom founded the earth, By understanding He established the heavens.* (**Prov. 3:19**) Even aged men who possess the wisdom gained from experience in life are subject to selfish and foolish intentions. See the story of the old prophet and the man of God (**1 Kings 13**).

Fourth, the results of hearing the wisdom of God

The results bring about very good things in my life. It causes me to avoid the evil way. Paul teaches us to, *abstain from every form of evil* (**1 Thess. 5:22**). I can do this when my heart is tuned to His word. When we listen to what God says, His promises then truly become as sweet as honey to our mouths. The promises of God are what everyone looks forward to, even those who do not heed His word. But the clincher is that when I listen to and follow after the word, yes, the promises of God, I will come to hate every false way. False teachers are abundant and we are warned throughout Scripture. Jesus tells us how to identify them in **Mat. 7:15-20**. And the apostle Paul warns us they are coming (**1 Tim. 4:1-3**). Yes, the word of God is the pure wisdom from heaven rather than the wisdom of a selfish, sensual nature that comes from the world (**Jas. 3:13-18**).

ACCEPT?

The account as it was told to me was fairly simple. A preacher presented a lesson on homosexuality, showing from the word of God that such is not in keeping with the will of God. After having shown homosexual relations to be sinful the preacher said that we (the preacher and the congregation of the people of God listening to him) would also be in sin if we (congregation of God's people) failed to *accept* them (homosexuals) as they are. Whoa! At this point the simplicity is no more. What did he mean by *accept*? Which of the eleven definitions given in the *New World Dictionary* did he have in mind? It would also be beneficial to have some clarification as to the object of the acceptance?

There is not, as far as I know, any congregation of the redeemed who would fail to accept the fact that a homosexual is a *human being*, a son/daughter of Adam. Everyone I know readily accepts homosexuals as subjects of the gospel (i.e., one needing to hear the soul-saving gospel of Jesus Christ). We are admonished to *"preach the gospel to the whole creation"* (Mark 16:15). Every faithful congregation of the people of God would readily accept such a one into fellowship upon genuine obedience to the gospel. It is at this point, I fear, that the preacher mentioned above would want to make an exception in order to accept the homosexual. The gospel plan of salvation is easily understood. One must come to the realization of the need for a Savior (*"...for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God"* - Romans 3:23). One must come to a knowledge of God (see Hebrews 11:6), and the knowledge that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God (*"...except he believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins"* - John 8:24; also see Mark 16:16). One must also confess the faith held in Jesus Christ; after hearing *"Jesus"* preached the Ethiopian Eunuch confessed *"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God"* (Acts 8:37; see also Romans 10:9-10; 1 Timothy 6:12). Of course, one must be immersed to be *"saved"* (Mark 16:16), that is, to have *the remission of your sins* (Acts 2:38), and come *"into Christ"* (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27).

The observant Bible student might want to stop here and exclaim, "Bill, you left something out! Something just after faith!" Yes, I did. . .to emphasize that *"repentance unto remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations"* (Luke 24:47; see Acts 2:38). It would appear that the preacher mentioned above would be satisfied without repentance on the part of homosexuals (so that we might accept them), or would be content with *partial repentance* (i.e., a repentance that does not include favorite sins). Peter, guided by the Holy Spirit said, *"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins. . ."* (Acts 2:38). No

repentance, no remission of sins! A partial repentance is, in reality, **no repentance**! Partial repentance places the wisdom of man over the wisdom of God (see Isaiah 55:8-9).

It makes no difference how many times a practicing homosexual is immersed in water, attends worship services attempts to partake of the Lord's Supper, nor how loving, kind or sincere she/he may be, that one is not right in the eyes of the Almighty. Such a one ought not (Yea, must not!) be accepted into the fellowship of a congregation of the people of God. *"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"* (Galatians 5:9). Acceptance (as a faithful Christian) must be denied for the exact same reason fellowship would be denied to a practicing prostitute (even one who prostitutes herself for room and board), a practicing thief or a practicing drunkard. Such can, by the grace of God, change (the fruit of repentance) and become useful and faithful in the Lord's kingdom: *"Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God"* (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Yes, the Lincoln church of Christ will accept such upon genuine obedience to the gospel of God's Son . . .an obedience which includes full hearted and on-going repentance (i.e., turn immediately to God each time we learn, via God's final revelation, the Holy Bible, that we are failing to do His divine and holy will). Yes, we will accept each and every such penitent, obedient homosexual!

William Beasley, Taken from the Lincoln Reader

If There Is No God

I believe in God. Most likely, you do also or you wouldn't be reading this article. Our common belief in the existence of an Almighty, however, does not mean that He does, in fact, exist; any more than the shared unbelief of millions of atheists mean that God does not, in fact, exist. One thing is for sure and for certain: God either DOES or DOES NOT, in fact and reality, EXIST. One and only one of those propositions IS true and it is not to be determined by my feelings about the matter but by the facts. It DOES, however, underscore the importance of the question by observing the implications of each answer.

For example: If there is no God then the universe came into existence out of nothing and with no cause. The theist asserts also that the universe came into existence out of nothing as well but with a Cause sufficient to the effect: an Almighty God. The Atheist

will absolutely demand the demonstration of a cause sufficient to every effect but when it comes to the existence of the universe itself will suddenly abandon all logic and say, "Ooops!! Here we don't need one! Nothing became tired of being nothing and became something and here we are. Good enough! See, God doesn't exist." If theists were to attempt a leap in logic like that they would cry a holy terror! (Pun intended) Lately atheists, instead of trying to escape the foolishness of the situation in which they have placed themselves, have embraced it and boasted of doing so. The idea of the universe creating itself would have been laughed at in any serious discussion not so long ago, but not today.

That says more about the heart of the individual than about their intellect!

Cleveland Reddinger

MARRIAGE DIVORCE REMARRIAGE

"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery" (Matthew 19:9).

Sadly, most NT Christians know what MDR refers to — Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage. The prevalence of divorce in our society and even among God's people means that we really don't have to explain MDR—most already know. They know because marriage, the dissolution of marriage, subsequent remarriages, heart ache, the breakup of homes, alienation, and bitterness are all too familiar for far too many people. Jesus has moved southward toward Judea. As He drew closer to Jerusalem, it was inevitable that challenges and controversy would follow Him. In fact, His entire earthly journey was laced with opposition. Still, the Master teacher was ready as always to give an answer, not from man but from God.

"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" Divorce was part of the fabric of Jewish society; and the prerogative to divorce was largely that of the man. The only real question was: Can a man divorce his wife for any reason whatsoever? This question stemmed from **Deuteronomy 24:1-4**, a passage that continues to foster much discussion, now as it did in the 1st c. Whatever you might say about *"the uncleanness"* in **Deuteronomy 24**, the passage actually is designed to make the husband stop and think about what he is doing. That is, he cannot (should not) capriciously send his wife away and then the next day think he can "just take her back." The passage provided some recourse for the wife.

The Pharisees probably didn't care if Jesus agreed with them or not; they were looking for some inconsistency in His teaching. Rather than buying into their Pharisaical nuances, Jesus takes them back to the beginning. In the beginning we find Adam and Eve, male and female, who were joined to each other (not to

animals) for life. The man is told to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife; one relationship yields to another, permanent, lasting one. Jesus (remember He was there at the beginning, too) said that when God joins two together, no one should separate them. In the book of Hosea God tells His servant to marry a wife of the land, a wife of whoredom. Hosea's actions and the actions of his wife mirrored the unfaithful relationship that existed between Israel and Jehovah. Before the OT closed, God gave a strong, clear warning, a corrective when He said: *"For what reason?" Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant" (Malachi 2:14).*

Marriage is from God, it is good, and it is beneficial to those who act right in that relationship. But isn't marriage also about God's faithfulness to His people? Marriage can and should reflect the righteous, faithful character of God's people. Where do we learn this lesson? We learn it from God, our Creator, our Savior, the one who has never failed us.

Randy Harshbarger

Handicapped by Pride

Those who suffer physical handicaps are, of course, limited in their ability to effectively accomplish certain manual tasks. We sympathize with their hardships and are sensitive to their special needs.

Sadly, there are many who — while having no physical impairment — are seriously handicapped by their own attitudes and actions. Among the worst of these injuries is the common malady of pride.

Consider some of the constraints that result from pride:

- Pride keeps one from accepting helpful advice and constructive criticism. Thus, the proud man misses out on the benefits he could gain through the words of wisdom offered by others (**Proverbs 10:8**).
- Pride prevents one from being corrected when he is wrong. He simply can't accept that something he has said or done could be in error. He feels a heavy burden to justify himself regardless of how glaring his mistake may be. He is simply blind to his own faults (**Rev. 3:17; Gal. 6:3, 1 Cor. 10:12**).
- Pride keeps one in a continual state of strife and contention. He is forever 'at odds' with someone over something (**Proverbs 13:10, 28:25**).
- Pride blocks confession and repentance. Both of these are essential to gaining forgiveness (**1 John 1:8-10, Luke 13:3**). Therefore, the proud person continues in his sin, ignoring the pleas of faithful brethren to turn back.
- Pride will ultimately keep one out of heaven (**Mark 7:20-23**).

by Greg Gwin

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

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WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE
CLASS - FORGIVENESS
JIM STAUFFER

SUNDAY SERMON:
LET THERE BE NO STRIFE



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10