



Wisdom, Spirituality, Religion and Truth

A few weeks ago I received in my e-mail inbox an article on a psychological study regarding wisdom. My first reaction to the article was, "How can you study wisdom from a psychological perspective?" So I read. The article spoke concerning the "Wisdom Project," conducted at the University of California Davis. In the study, the researchers sought correlations between religion, spirituality, and wisdom. The researchers concluded that those who were "spiritual" were more likely to be wise than those who were "religious." "Spiritual" people were defined as people who "create their own sense of truth." "Religious" people, on the other hand, were defined as people who belong to a community of those who are like-minded—i.e. a church. What did the research find? That those who were "spiritual" tended to be wiser than those who were religious. The study even listed not attending religious services as one of the predictors of wisdom.

After I read this, I thought that this was all wrong, but I couldn't place my finger upon how they had come to these conclusions. Then I realized something. The definition of wisdom that they used predefined the kind of people that tended toward that "wisdom." What was their definition of wisdom? In essence, they defined wisdom as being open minded to all different kinds of ideas. It should be obvious that if "spiritual" people are defined as creating their own sense of truth, that they would be open to just about anything and since that is how "wisdom" is defined, they were "wise" by definition. On the other hand, "religious" people, who are more concerned about being like-minded, i.e. promoting a standard of truth that is objective for all, would not be as open to just any old teaching, hence, by definition, they would not be "wise." I also noticed another assumption which was incorrect, namely, that religious people are not spiritual people and vice versa. The last time I read my Bible, the religious were spiritual and the spiritual were religious as well. But again, it goes back to the way that those terms were

being defined for this study.

First, what does the Bible have to say about "wisdom" and the source for wisdom? The first passage that came to my mind was James 1:5 "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." The source of wisdom is from God. That means that wisdom cannot be defined as stated above, namely, just accepted any old thing as truth, because God has defined for us truth. If wisdom comes from God and God's truth is absolute, then God's wisdom is going to be absolute as well. Proverbs 9:10 states, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." For one to be truly wise means to fear God. The definition of wisdom that involves creating one's own truth is an incorrect definition.

Second, what does the Bible have to say about being "spiritual"? It certainly doesn't mean that one has abandoned religion. In 1 Corinthians 14:37, Paul wrote, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." Spirituality meant acknowledging the truthfulness of the things that Paul and the other apostles wrote as the commandments of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 2:13-16 also teaches that for one to be spiritual one must acknowledge the words of the Spirit of Christ. Being spiritual means that one lives according to the desires of the Spirit instead of the desires of the flesh (1 Corinthians 3:1). Being spiritual means that we be the kind of people that God wants us to be in His service (1 Peter 2:5).

What is the fundamental problem with these terms "wisdom" and "spiritual" as used in this study? The words have been redefined not to reflect the truth regarding these words and their appropriate use, but to reflect how Satan through society has changed the definition of these words to propagate a façade of spirituality. There is no differ-

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Discouraging Others

The psalmist warned, "Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel" (Psa. 69:6).

As we reach forward to God, we all know how frustrating it is to be discouraged in our efforts to live the Christian life. Knowing this, we should give extra caution that we do nothing that would discourage someone else as they try to make progress in their Christian walk. It is a great offense to the Lord to be a "stumbling block," particularly to those who've not yet acquired much strength of their own. Jesus said, "Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones" (Luke 17:1-2). It's a serious sin to discourage others.

Furthermore, Jesus upbraided some of the religious leaders of His day, saying: "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered" (Luke 11:52). As "so-called" expert students of the Scriptures, these discouraging individuals might have been expected to be the

first to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. When they refused to deal honestly with the evidence their sin became double in that: "ye entered not in yourselves," AND "them that were entering in ye hindered."

Many are like these discouraging lawyers who do not to take responsibility negative influence on others. Many are quick to take credit for any good influence they've had, but are not so eager to accept blame when they've had a negative impact. If our brethren have made bad choices, we argue that those choices were their own responsibility - nothing we did MADE them act as they did. And that's true, obviously. But if others end up being lost for their sinful choices, we also may lose our souls by aiding them in their wrong choices through our discouragement.

Friends, No man is so insignificant as to be sure his example can be of no discouragement. Each day we encourage or discourage our brethren with which we come in contact. It's hard enough already for many around us to keep moving faithfully ahead in their Christian walk. If, by our example, we make it even harder for them, we should expect God's extreme displeasure. And not only that, we should expect to find our own lives less happy. Remember, No deed that sets an evil example can bring joy to the doer.

We need to encourage as God commanded Moses to encourage Joshua.

"But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it ... But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see" (Deut. 1:38; 3:28).

Let us all be encouragers and not discouragers.

Tom Moore
Malvern, AR

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ence in changing a definition and in telling a lie. How God has defined these words over the ages, however, has been consistent. Wisdom and spirituality are both things that come from God and His word. They have a firm standard of truth to support them, namely, the knowledge of Christ. When it comes to wisdom and spirituality, let us make Paul's prayer to the Colossians our own: "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col.1:9).

Kevin Cauley

Sermons and Study Topics

Week of 11/28/04

Morning	Doing and Teaching
Scripture	Acts 1:1, 2
Evening ...	Was Paul An Apostle In the Same Sense As The 12?
Scripture	2 Cor.12:12
Sunday Morning Bible Study	The Book of Hebrews
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	Studying the Cross

Weekly Record

Week of 11/21/04

Sunday Class	58
Sunday A.M.	70
Sunday P.M.	50
Wednesday	49
Contribution.....	\$1567.03
Budget	\$1778.13

Is Christ Really In Christmas?

On Christmas, American statesman Benjamin Franklin observed: "How many observe Christ's birthday! How few, His precepts! O! 'tis easier to keep Holidays than Commandments!"

The word "Christmas" isn't found in the Bible, nor does the Bible reveal the day of His birth. "Inexplicable though it seems, the date of Christ's birth is not known" (New Catholic Encyclopedia, 3:656). Only 2 of the 4 gospel accounts give any details of His birth. Yet, all four give large emphasis His redemptive death and resurrection. There is no New Testament command or apostolic example in the early church to observe the birth of Jesus as a religious memorial. The Catholic Encyclopedia admits, "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church" (3:724). So, Christ was never in Christmas. So, since the religious observance of Christ's birth isn't in the Bible that should be our rule of faith and practice, when did men originate this practice?

1. Christmas' History. For the man-made origin of Christmas, the New Catholic Encyclopedia says, "The birth of Christ was assigned the date of the winter solstice (December 25 in the Julian Calendar, January 6 in the Egyptian), because on this day, as the sun began its return to northern skies, the pagan devotees of Mithra [Persian god of light] celebrated the birthday of the 'Invincible Sun.' On December 25, 274, [Roman Caesar] Aurelian had proclaimed the sun-god principal patron of the empire and dedicated a temple to him...Christmas originated at a time when the cult of the sun was particularly strong at Rome. Some of the church fathers contrasted the birth of Christ and the winter solstice. From the beginning of the 3rd century, 'Sun of Justice' appears as a title of Christ....The feast is first mentioned in the Roman almanac of 354 A.D....The oldest Christmas sermon extant was given...around 383 A.D....It is not found in the list of feasts given by Tertullian [160-220 A.D.] and Origen [185 -254 A.D.]".

In 354 A.D., December 25th was adopted as Christ's birthday "by order of Bishop Liberius of Rome" (World Book Encyclopedia). Hence, The Collier's Encyclopedia observes, "The church in this way grasped every oppor-

tunity to turn people away from a purely pagan observance of the winter solstice to a day of adoration of Christ the Lord. Both Cyrian and John Chrysostom allude to this in their writings."

In fact, we know the time of Christ's birth not in the winter months. Respected commentator Albert Barnes observed on Luke 2:8 about the shepherds tending their flocks by night outdoors: "The climate was mild, and, to keep their flocks from straying, they spent the night with them. It is also a fact that the Jews sent out their flocks into the mountains and desert regions during the summer months, and took them up in the latter part of October or the first of November, the cold weather commenced....It is probable from this that our Savior was born before the 25th of December or before what we call Christmas. At that time it is cold, and especially in the high and mountainous regions about Bethlehem. The exact time of His birth is unknown; there is no way to ascertain it....Nor is it consequence to know the time; if it were, God would have preserved the record of it. Matters of moment are clearly revealed; those that He regards as of no importance are concealed" (Barnes Notes on the NT, p. 189).

The word itself, "Christmas," comes from the Old English term "Cristes Maesse" which meant "the mass of Christ." This reflects Catholic teaching, made official in 1038 A.D., that the Catholic Mass is the unbloodied sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ. This is a man-made perversion of the Lord's Supper. It contradicts to Hebrews 7:27 that teaches Christ's body was offered "once for all" (never to be repeated).

2. Christ's Memorial. Jesus Himself gave what memorial He wanted Christians to memorialize Him. "And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood'" (Luke 22:19-20). The birth of Jesus was merely a means to a greater redemptive end. The death for our sins of the resurrected Jesus is

the emphasis of His memorial. We should observe it weekly, like the early church, "on the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7, 2:42; Matt 26:29). Sunday is the day of His resurrection (Mk 16:9), that proves the truth of His teaching and salvation (Jn 2:18-22; Rom 1:4). We should bow before King Jesus in grateful obedience, by respecting His authorized memorial and following His commands. This is giving Him devotion that He, not man, directs (Matt 7:21, Lk 9:23). He challenges us, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Lk 6:46). Jesus wants our life-service, not mere lip-service. He challenges us to follow Him year-round in loving devotion: "If you love Me, you will keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15). It's no good for anyone to sing annually, "Oh come let us adore Him," and then go "ignore" Him by not doing what He says the rest of the year. Instead of occasionally bowing before the nativity scene of a cuddly, undemanding baby, let us bow before the Son of God, who was slain for our sins. Let us wholeheartedly submit to His gracious authority in all we do. "In whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord" (Col 3:17).

Christians must resist man-made traditions (Mark 7:6-13). We must follow only the pure Word of God and not go beyond it (1 Peter 4:11, 1 Cor 4:6). Let us be content to observe Christ's weekly memorial of the Lord's Supper. Let us respect the New Testament as the complete and perfect guide for our faith and practice. Let us show our devotion to the Son of God by living for Him daily!

Information compiled by *Dwayne White*

Elders:

Clay Bozarth, Leon Duncan,
Bruce Foster, Bill Fort, Glenn
Quigley

Deacons:

Ken Smith, Brent Stevens,
Rusty Windle.

Preacher:

Kevin Cauley... 870-423-6707

- We are truly thankful to God for the wonderful new Lord's day that he has given us today to worship him in Spirit and in Truth!
- Please pray for the following individuals: Helen Bradley, Debbie Duncan, Donna Henderson, Shelba Miller, Glenn Quigley.
- Please remember our shut-ins, Curtis and Opal Hull, and Edith Mischler.
- Please extend a warm welcome to our new members, Bob and Carolyn Philips. They have expressed a desire to work and worship under the oversight of the elders of this congregation. Bob and Carolyn reside at 103 Westview Dr. in Berryville.
- Tomorrow, November 29th, the truck from the children's home will arrive. They will pick up all of the food in our pantry. They will also pick up any good clothes or furniture that you may wish to donate. Please make sure all donations are clean and sorted.
- Friday, December 17th is the scheduled date for our annual holiday party at the Smith's. For further information, please see Ken or Debbie.
- Next Sunday evening will be the monthly elders and deacons meeting. Please see one of those men if you have any items for this meeting.
- Monthly assignments for December are: Brent Stevens, announcements; Bill Fort, worship coordinator; Tiffany Windle and Pam Pinkley, prepare communion; John Gass, carry communion.
- The pantry item for this week is Pinto Beans.



Welcome!

To the Berryville church of Christ.

Family Times for Worship and Study

Sunday Morning Bible Class:..... 9:30 AM
 Sunday Morning Worship: 10:30 AM
 Sunday Evening Worship: 6:00 PM
 Ladies Bible Class: 10:30 AM
 Wed. Evening Bible Class: 7:00 PM

Serving Each Other

November 28th, 2004 December 5th, 2004

	November 28th, 2004	December 5th, 2004
Sunday Morning		
Songs:	Brent Stevens	Ken Smith
Preaching:	Kevin Cauley	Kevin Cauley
Opening Prayer:	Dan Hand	Leon Duncan
Scripture Reading:	Ray Duncan	Brent Moore
Lord's Table	Rusty Windle	Bruce Foster
(assist)	John Gass	George Eddings
	Brent Moore	Ray Duncan
	Jerry Roller	Jerry Roller
Closing Prayer	George Eddings	Bill Fort
Sunday Evening		
Songs:	Rusty Windle	Brent Stevens
Preaching:	Kevin Cauley	Kevin Cauley
Opening Prayer:	Glenn Williams	Dale Pinkley
Scripture Reading:	Jack Gentry	Brandon Foster
Lord's Table	Leon Duncan	Rusty Windle
	John Gass	Bob Moore
Closing Prayer	Bill Fort	Ken Smith
Wednesday		
Songs:	Bruce Foster	Glenn Williams
Opening Prayer:	John Gass	Clay Bozarth
Invitation:	Leon Duncan	Rusty Windle
Closing Prayer:	Rusty Windle	Bob Philips

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