

Is it Ignorance or Did We Just Get Lazy?

In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis described vague religion as being so attractive because it is all thrills and no work, much like watching the waves from the beach. He noted that you will not get to Newfoundland by studying the Atlantic that way, nor will you get there by looking at maps and never going to sea, or by going to sea without a map.

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If we embark on a journey and expect to arrive on time with as little misdirection as possible, we'll need a map. It helps to understand the plan to reach our destination before we leave home.

We'll want to know that the directions are correct. Before the days of map apps and global positioning systems, we used foldout maps, memory or intuition. Even when we wandered off course, we thought that driving in circles would get us back on track. After being harangued by a frustrated passenger, we would stop at a gas station, albeit reluctantly, to ask directions. Do this a few times and you realize that other people might not get you to where you're going, either.

Get Eternal Wisdom

What about our journey to eternity? Think of the stubborn people you have known who refused every opportunity to hear the Gospel, accept Christ and repent of their sins. One day they found themselves with a short time to live, and having lived a life without direction, they realized they were facing

an unknown eternal future. When they breathe their final breath, will they arrive at a destination they will regret for eternity?

We all need an accurate roadmap to get us to where we're going. It turns out that we have the number one map, the global positioning system that beats all others—the Word of God. The Bible is our primary source for gaining the wisdom and understanding that, when obeyed, helps us follow the correct path to our preferred eternal destination. It shows us how to overcome the unexpected roadblocks, hindrances and battles along the way.

Our responsibility is to read those directions and follow them. How many people self-identify as Christians but have no fruit to prove it? How many have perfected the art of telling others where to go and what to do, but their wrong directions are leading people off a rocky cliff?

How many are being led astray through deception? In most of the New Testament, the word *deceive* comes from the Greek word *plano*, which means to lead astray, to be deluded, to wander, to be led off course in the wrong direction. Sadly, many deceived people don't realize they are being deceived, and in fact, they will often claim to be hearing from the Holy Spirit.

Early in our salvation journey, we must begin to learn the truth. If we don't know the truth, how will we know when we're being lied to and deceived? You will not recognize the truth if you have no foundation for truth. Born-again believers should be willing to learn truth and endure the sound doctrine of the Bible, and not wander off into the craziness that is so readily found on social media and the internet. We cannot allow ourselves to fall away from the faith by listening to doctrines of demons and deceitful spirits that are operating through people.

In John chapter 14 when Jesus said, "You know where I go and you know the way," Thomas questioned, "We don't know where you're going, and we don't know the way." Jesus replied, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Jesus was not only saying, *follow me if you want to have life and know the way and the truth*; He was also saying, I am the truth.

John 1:1 and 1:14 reveal that, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," and "the Word became 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." Jesus Christ, Yeshua, the Son of the Living God, is the Word, and the Word is truth. The Bible itself equates the Word of God to Jesus. He was the Word in the beginning, and when He returns to rule the earth, He will be called Faithful and True, and His name is called The Word of God (Rev. 19:11, 13).

Reason and Purpose in God's Wisdom

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness, so that God's people may be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Bible is not just a book of stories and religious doctrine; it is the inspired Word of God. We cannot place a monetary value on the Bible because it was inspired by God Himself, and the Word of God became flesh and lived among us. Through Jesus, the Word, we have a pathway to salvation and eternal life, along with a perfectly accurate roadmap for life.

In the United States, many people take the Bible for granted. In countries where Christianity is outlawed and the church is underground, believers are desperate for the things we consider common. They are thrilled to receive a Bible, or even a small portion of a Bible. They also live with an awareness that if they are caught, they can be imprisoned, tortured or

executed for their faith.

Western nations should thank God every day that we can go online or walk into a bookstore and find rows of Bibles of various translations, along with hundreds of Christian books from just as many authors. We should be thankful that we are free to attend church, and that in some areas, we can choose from hundreds of churches. We have easy access to Christian radio and television.

The Problem Hiding In Plain Sight

So, why is the level of deception and biblical ignorance off the charts in the United States and other free western nations? It is pathetic to see the church that has religious freedom become so lukewarm. Believers who should know better are listening to lies, liars, deceivers and doctrines of demons. Every person with access to the internet can create their own theology and confuse people about the truth.

Equally as frustrating are the alleged Christians who read the Bible with the intent to argue theology that has no impact on salvation or eternity, and then beat people over the head with their "knowledge." Some of these people seem to know more about the occult and New Age beliefs than they know about the Bible, yet they successfully confuse some Christians who listen to these deceivers and then complain that they don't know what to believe! The purveyors of lies, deception, false doctrine and vain babblings are forever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 3:7). Don't be the person who is guilty of filling your head with knowledge, yet still having no knowledge of truth.

When Christians are confused about truth, when they question the promises of God found in His Word, when they believe or spread deception, and when they become a false witness or spread false doctrine, we can know two things about those Christians. First, they have no prayer life. And second, they

are not reading or obeying the Word.

When Christians have a prayer life, God reveals truth to them. My siblings and I will always remember how our dad would fervently pray, and if we were even *thinking* of doing something we shouldn't do, God would show him. Dad could discern when a person wasn't being truthful. The Holy Spirit might show him a person who appeared as an apple that looked good on the outside, but the inside was rotten to the core. Dad wasn't more special than other believers; he simply prayed a lot, and he especially prayed in the Spirit.

If Christians will read their Bible and develop a prayer life, God will show them the truth. The Spirit of truth will guide you to all truth (John 16:13). The Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12). Then you must obey the Word. Be doers of the Word and not hearers only; otherwise, you deceive yourselves (James 1:22). Those who do the Word will be blessed in their deeds (James 1:25).

The Bible itself tells us the many benefits of the Word. If you hear the Word and follow it, you will be like the man who builds a house on the rock, so that when the storm comes, his house remains standing (Matt. 7:24-25). God doesn't say we won't experience storms; He tells us that if we follow His Word, we will remain standing through the storm.

We live by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4). When we interpret and live our lives according to the Word, we will renew our minds (Rom. 12:2). God's Word is our pathway to deliverance. It is our sword for battle as we fight by speaking the promises of God over situations. We cannot speak it and fight with it unless we have read it and hidden it in our hearts. We cannot deny our circumstances and problems, but we can fight using the words of the same God who

spoke the universe into existence.

The Bible and prayer are critical for our spiritual growth, our relationship with God, and our relationships with every person we encounter. We even need wisdom to stay alive after that driver forces us to slam our brakes on the highway. When the Word transforms us, we learn to walk the walk and not just talk the talk.

Believers must not cherry-pick the verses to obey. Some Christians brag that they have their flesh under control, but they ignore their gossiping tongue that is so long they could wrap it around a telephone pole six times.

If you try to read the Bible but cannot understand it, ask God to open your mind to understand (Luke 24:45). Books, teachings and sermons should not serve as a substitute for reading the Bible for yourself. The Bible should be your foundation, and other things added will serve to amplify your understanding of things you've already read in the Bible. Reading for yourself will also help you discern deception.

Get Back to the Place You Should Not Have Left

I encourage you to increase your prayer and Bible reading, and to make this a daily discipline. Start by reading a couple of chapters in a Bible translation you can understand. Soon you will discover that the more you read it, the more you will *want* to read it. The more times you read through the Bible, the more things you will learn that you didn't catch the previous time you read it. Let God's roadmap change your life until you become more like Christ. The journey isn't always easy, but the directions were given long ago.

The longing of every believer should be to one day hear God say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." The Bible is given to help us achieve that if we will obey.

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