

Keep Your Mind Closed

by Steve Hill

What does it mean to have a “closed” mind? The easiest way to define closed-mindedness is to define the opposite.

To say a person is open-minded is to say he is free from rigidly fixed preconceptions. That means he is willing to listen to arguments and other ideas, allowing himself to be swayed from whatever views or opinions he may have held on a subject.

Personally, I am open-minded about many things. For example, I am thankful for the new ideas in the field of communication. Hieroglyphics on the walls of caves, the Pony Express and Morse code have evolved into e-mail, cellular phones and overnight shipping companies.

In this world of mass communication, I am wide open to new ideas. In fact, I can't imagine what life would be like without my laptop, voice-activated cell phone and iPod.

Transportation and medicine are two other areas toward which I maintain an open mind. I'm glad that in order to preach a meeting, I don't have to ride in the heat all day on a horse as George Whitefield and John Wesley did. Automobiles equipped with heating and air conditioning are a good thing. Double-decker planes, super-sonic jets and high-speed trains are welcome conveniences in our fast-paced world.

I also thank God that back in 1846 medical science developed anesthesia. Years ago while framing a house, I fell three stories and injured my arm. It was broken in half, and the bones kept scraping back and forth against each other, causing excruciating pain.

How grateful I was that because of anesthesia, I felt no pain

as the doctors performed surgery on my arm. It sure beats the days when patients would go into shock as doctors performed surgery without numbing the pain. With open arms I welcome the future of medicine.

The advances in nanotechnology and the ever-increasing benefits of laser have everyone, including me, on the edges of our seats. What an exciting time to be alive and to have an open mind!

Even more than being open to technological advances, I am open to input from God's Holy Spirit. The Bible says His thoughts are higher than my thoughts, so whatever He wants to do, however He wants to do it, is fine with me. In my more than 30 years of ministry, I've learned the importance of letting God be God.

Having an open mind is healthy in some areas, but it is extremely dangerous in others. For example, when it comes to the fundamental teachings of Jesus Christ, there is no room for debate.

The common expression, "Jesus said it, I believe it, that settles it" is quaint. However, if Jesus said it, that settles it, whether you believe it or not. Concerning such spiritual issues, you'd better have a closed mind; you want to have a rigidly fixed preconception.

Why? Because Satan is still on the move, seeking whom he may devour, and he is promoting a belief system that is whittling away the truth of the gospel and undermining Christian beliefs. He is using the vehicles of television, theater, movies, the Internet and other mass media to do it.

The belief system includes the ideas that God would never actually send anyone to hell and that there are more ways to heaven than Jesus. Young people particularly are buying into this system. Many of them, as well as other Christians I meet, have relaxed their so-called primitive views and are adhering

to a more open-minded approach toward Christianity. They are waffling on the fundamental doctrines of the faith.

I agree with the prophets that we are about to experience the greatest revival in church history. But in the midst of this mighty visitation from God, we will see many believers lose their grip on God. While millions are clasping His hand even tighter, others will loosen their hold and will be seduced by lukewarm teaching. Paul mentioned this trend in his first letter to Timothy, calling the heretical teaching “doctrines of demons”

(1 Tim. 4:1, NKJV). It's as if the devil will come along with his crow bar and begin prying people loose from their Christian foundation. The things they once believed—perhaps even fought for—will seem unimportant.

The basic beliefs held by our grandfathers and grandmothers regarding the cross, the shed blood of Christ, holiness and so on have become objects of intense scrutiny and debate. They are now looked upon as a serious endangerment to freedom of thought and enlightenment.

The fear of God and the convictions many people once had are being questioned and, in many cases, dropped by the wayside. The fiery zeal we were once known for—that evangelistic, zealous spirit that's always going after God and after souls—has waned and is nothing more than a smoldering ember. The love of Christ for fallen mankind that once motivated us to witness and evangelize is a distant memory.

To keep from buying into any philosophy or belief system other than the one presented in God's Word, I encourage you to keep a closed mind regarding the following issues.

The gospel of Jesus Christ. There is only one gospel. The word gospel means “good news.” The Bible says, “‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that who ever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.’”

Jesus said: "'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'" (John 3:16; 14:6).

Many people—even clergy—believe the scope of God's grace extends beyond the Christian community. Basically, they argue that a just and merciful God would never condemn anyone simply because he did not profess faith in Jesus Christ. I assure you, there is only one way to heaven, and that's through our Savior, Jesus Christ. One Savior, one way. His way.

The Bible. The Bible is accurate from cover to cover. It is the best-selling book of all times. A copy of it is in 94 percent of American households.

Second Timothy 3:16-17 states, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." "All Scripture" means every word.

With that in mind, take note of the warning given in Revelation 22:18-19: "'For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.'"

Humanists and lukewarm theologians have set out to disprove the divine inspiration of Scripture in a feeble attempt to limit its power of conviction. Mark Twain said, "Most people are bothered by those passages of Scripture they don't understand, but the passages that bother me are those I do understand."

There are many Scriptures in the Bible that are easy to understand. But because these texts bother people, some attempt to change their meaning. How futile! It's the Word of

God! It can't be changed!

Remember the definition of “open-mindedness”? Concerning communication: Let's talk. Concerning technology: I can't wait to hear the latest news. Concerning medicine: What's the newest discovery? Concerning Scripture: You're wasting your time. End of discussion!

The doctrine of original sin and the danger of living a sinful life. Adam and Eve had it made in the shade. They had everything a man or woman could want. God gave them power and authority over every living thing, food in abundance, and fellowship with Him.

He also gave them one rule. God said, “'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die'” (Gen. 2:16-17).

But Satan crept up to Eve and coaxed her to be more open-minded about God's sovereign warning.

“The serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'” (Gen. 3:4-5).

I'm sure you know the tragic result: Eve disobeyed God and encouraged her husband to do the same.

No, regarding sin, I am not open for discussion and the consideration of other ideas. As the Scriptures clearly declare, sin is breaking God's law:

- Isaiah 59:2: Sin separates you from God.
- John 8:34: Sin will enslave you.
- Romans 6:16: Sin ends in death.

My stand concerning sin is simple: Jesus said, “Go and sin no more.” He didn't say, “Go and sin a little bit,”

or "Go and try not to sin," or "Go and think about it." Jesus had a closed mind about sin, and so do I.

Heaven and hell. Do you know that God has an open mind toward man? He does!

The Bible makes it clear that God wants everyone to be saved: "'Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?' says the Lord God, 'and not that he should turn from his ways and live?'" (Ezek. 18:23).

God has done everything He could for all of us to gain eternal life. He does not want anyone to perish. But those who deny Him and pursue other gods, including the god of self, are spitting in His merciful face.

The wrath promised is held back because of God's mercy.

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

People make a choice to be damned. Jesus said, "'Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Matt. 25:41). He was talking about hell.

Jesus said about heaven, "'In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you'" (John 14:2). That's an awesome statement!

And again, I choose to remain closed-minded. Once Jesus says it, that settles it. "'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also'" (John 14:3).

When I read Scriptures like that, my mind closes to anything else. "Oh, you really think there's a place up there with streets of gold?" Yes, it's going to be incredible.

"How can you believe that?" It's called faith in God. I've got a closed mind. When it comes to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, there's only one way.

Are you easily intimidated by those with other beliefs when you try to witness in your school or workplace? Do you find yourself confused, considering their arguments?

Or, are you like I was for so many years? Without Jesus as my Lord and Savior, I was open-minded to anything that might bring a little meaning to life, a little escape from reality.

It's simple: Either you know Jesus, or you don't. Leonard Ravenhill once told me, "A man who is intimate with God will never be intimidated by man."

Are you intimate with God? Is Jesus your best friend?

If so, then keep in mind that He is the only way, the truth and the life. He is the only way to get to God. Take this truth, put it safely in the vault of your understanding, lock the door and throw away the key.

Keep a closed mind!