

How Much Do You Really Know for Sure?

As I write this, I'm looking at the beginning of the 4th quarter—not of football, but of the year. And what a year it is! It certainly has not been boring. There's internal strife and divisions within the country, wars and rumors of wars without, and overwhelming challenges recovering from natural disasters—hurricanes, earthquakes and wildfires.

It seems that these days many people know a lot about everything; they just don't know what they don't know yet. One thing's for sure: some are very eager to share their knowledge and, without hesitation, offer their opinions, advice, judgments, solutions and answers to all the world's problems via social media, protests, letters and emails. You will hear what they say whether you want to or not. Oh for the days when newscasters just reported the news and allowed you to draw your own conclusions!

What can we say and what can we do with all this? How can we best communicate with those whose minds are already set in one direction? How do we reason with the unreasonable? How do we help those whom the enemy has deceived, who feel their perception is the only true one? How can we see both sides of an issue and find solutions?

We are shaped to a degree by our environment and the role models who most impacted our lives. Whether good or evil, we are influenced as children one way or another. When I was a child, my elementary school teacher told us a story that continues to affect my attitudes and actions to this day. She told of five blind men who stopped to examine an elephant.

Each one stood in front of a different part of the elephant. One touched his wide side and said, "This is a big wall."

Another held the elephant's trunk and said, "You are so wrong. This a snake." Placing both hands around the animal's leg the third man exclaimed, "Neither of you know what you are talking about. This is clearly a tree." The fourth grabbed the mammal's tail and said, "What is wrong with you? Don't you know what a rope feels like?" The fifth man stroked the elephant's ear and insisted, "None of you are right. Your perceptions are all wrong. This is definitely a fan."

After making their assessments, the five men argued emphatically among themselves, each insisting that the others were wrong and that he himself was the bearer of truth. This was a classic case of "the blind leading the blind" (see Matt. 15:14). Although each man insisted he had the truth, none had the whole picture. All of them were seeing "through a glass, darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12, KJV).

Often we are like this. We make a judgment about a person or situation based on the facts we have. The problem is, we don't have all the facts! We have perceptions and perhaps even revelations, but they are always incomplete. Only God sees and knows all, and He is the only true and righteous judge. In His wisdom He admonishes us in His Word to "judge not, that [we] be not judged" (Matt. 7:1).

He also shows us that our words carry weight. They influence and impact others. "A soft answer turns away wrath" (Prov. 15:1). Jesus said we would be condemned or justified by our words (see Matt. 12:37). Paul admonished us to bless and not curse (see Rom. 12:14). When we are attacked, either verbally or physically, our initial response may be to retaliate, but we must remember that the Lord we serve will enable us to respond as He would.

When I am tempted to make a judgment that is not based on an absolute, I remember the elephant story and rest in the knowledge that I don't have all the answers. It's OK for me to say, "I just don't know, but God does, and I can trust Him to

work it out and show me what I need to know and what I'm to do about it." I commit to keeping my spirit open to receive truth from the One who is Truth, acknowledging that my view, like that of the five blind men, is limited, while His is all-encompassing.

As we enter this 4th quarter of the year, let's grab hold of the horns of the altar, seek to bless and not curse, pray for our enemies, align ourselves with His Word, walk in love and ask for His wisdom as we approach every situation.

Prayer Power for the Week of Oct. 1, 2017

Pray this week that the Lord will increase your discernment and ability to see things the way He does. Ask for His love for people and for prayer strategies to pull down strongholds and set the captives free. Continue to pray that revival would ignite in our nation and spread around the world. Remember those suffering from terrorism, earthquakes and hurricanes. Pray for Mexico, Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Pray for our leaders and allies. Read: Prov. 15:1, Matt. 12:37, Rom. 12:14; 2 Chron. 7:14.