

The Bible Meditator



God's Desire to Make Us Happy

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By Troy M Cummings

The word “happiness” is one of the most pleasant and appealing words in our language. The greatest treasure in the world is happiness in the doing of God’s will. Every normal person seeks happiness. The whole world is struggling and working and dreaming of true happiness, but for most people it will never come. The trouble is that most people do not know what true happiness is, nor where it is found, nor how to attain it, nor how to hold it. Every conceivable effort is made by unhappy mankind to lay hold of the true Joys of life here and hereafter. There can be no subject in the world more appealing to the hearts of all people than the subject of happiness.

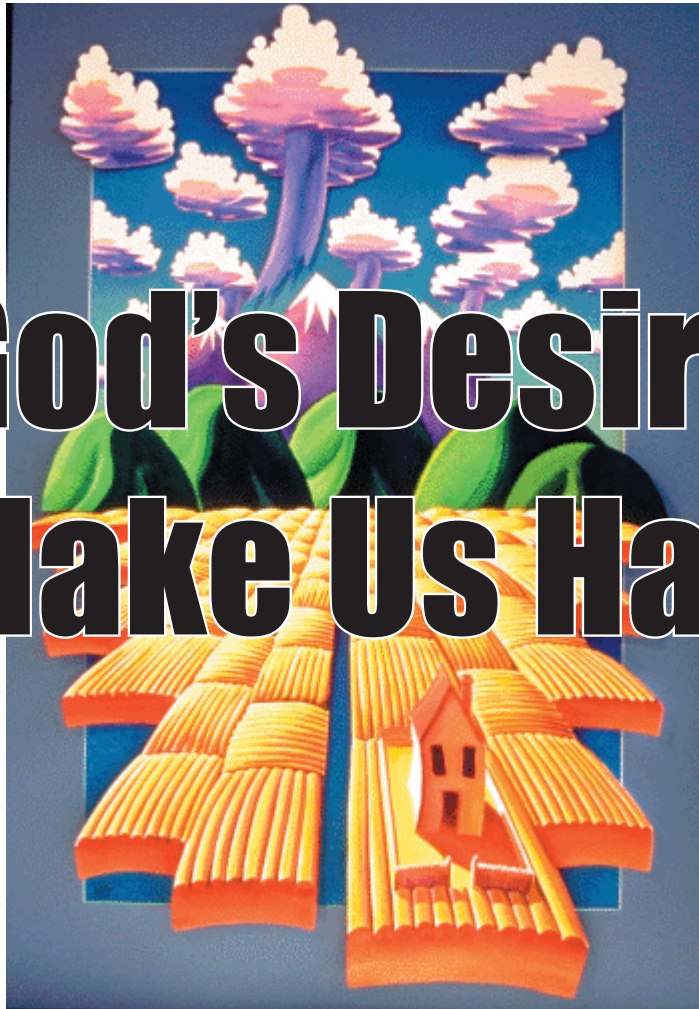
You know, of course, that I am speaking of happiness as it pertains to the will of our Father in heaven. *The truth is that there can be no true and lasting happiness here and hereafter except in the path of duty to the will of Him who created us.* God’s will is absolutely supreme in this universe, and man must sooner or later recognize this. But mankind is not attracted to the doing of God’s will, as it ought to be. Instead people turn away from God’s will and constantly seek to live their own lives and find what they call happiness—all apart from God. These efforts are all vanity and a striving after the wind.

But now I want to move closer still to the exact idea I have in mind in this article. I want to present to you the wonderful fact—unknown by so many—that *the true happiness the world is constantly struggling for is found in the doing of our Father’s will, and nowhere else. Furthermore, there is another marvelous truth unknown to many: that God our Father requires us to do His will in order that He may give us true and eternal happiness. God does not require us to obey Him simply to assert His divine authority or to show His power. God is our Creator, our Judge, our King, our Lawgiver, but above all He is our loving heavenly Father who desires above everything else to make us happy here and hereafter forever. There is not one requirement that God ever placed upon man that was not intended as an expression of His love for man and of His yearning desire to make man truly happy.*

If sinful and rebellious mankind could just see this wonderful, marvelous truth and never forget it, what a radical change there would be in human lives. Man would:

- cease to rebel against God and His requirements;
- cease to hate the Lord and His church;
- cease to be the slave of sin;
- *gladly* come back to the arms of a loving Father in heaven;
- *happily* obey Him all the days of his life.

Why? Besides being right, he would know that he would find the true *happiness* here and hereafter for which his soul yearns and seeks. He would quickly learn to *love* God his Father because he would realize that God loves him and desires to make him happy. Think, meditate



God’s Desire to Make Us Happy

often on this marvelous truth—so plainly taught throughout the Bible. You cannot think of it too much. Nothing will change your life more. Nothing will bring you happiness like recognizing it and living by it.

We have space for only a brief notice of some of the many passages in God’s word that teach this sublime truth, that God desires to make man happy.

Occasionally “happiness” is used by worldly-minded people to refer to shallow and deceptive pleasures, or to things grossly sinful in themselves. Many are temporarily deceived into thinking they are having a good time, and that they have found

“happiness.” But sooner or later they will discover to their sorrow and bitter regret that the end of sinful pleasures is corruption and misery and death (Rom. 6:23; Pro. 13:15; Gal. 6: 7, 8). The testimony and experience of millions remind us of this. But I am not here speaking only of those scandalous sins and vices, which destroy us so horribly. I am also referring to those “respectable” sins of respectable people, moral, good citizens, and such like, but at the same time standing aloof from God, Christ, the gospel, the church of the Lord, and the work of God. Be not deceived, sooner or later, in this life or the next, they too must discover that the wages of their sin is death (1 Pet. 4: 17, 18). They too will discover that

there can be no deep, abiding happiness here or hereafter while ignoring God and His will—even though they may be moral and respectable. They are living on borrowed time; their eyes are closed to their lost condition; they live in a make-believe world and say, “Peace, peace, I’m all right—when God says, “There is no peace with me nor in your soul.”

Christians who are not happy deep in their souls are not true Christians, nor true representatives of the Lord’s people. Sad it is to know that many in the church do not have the joy of their Lord in their lives. Why? Because they are not wholeheartedly enter-

ing into the work of the Lord; they are shallow, part-time Christians, whose hearts are divided over

trying to serve two masters—God and the world. I am sure myself that half-hearted Christians whose lives are very bitter and selfish and unattractive are some of the worst enemies of the Lord’s cause. People of the world look upon these poor specimens of the church and turn away in disgust. If that is what being a Christian is, they say, they want none of it.

Whole-hearted Christians are happy; they rejoice always; they can smile through the tears; they are persecuted and

they suffer, but not in despair and hopelessness and bitterness. Their souls are kept refreshed by the well of water springing up in them unto eternal life (Joh. 4). God’s love is blooming in their hearts; the garden of their soul is filled with the fruit of the Holy Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control. No temporary sorrow or calamity can overwhelm their spirit or their faith. Their feet are fixed firmly on the solid rock of the Ages, Christ the Lord. No stormy blasts can sweep them from the anchor of their souls, their living hope of life eternal. †

Meditating on Scripture Daily

Based on the New King James Version

Judges

By Don Ruhl

Jun. 1 Jdg. 14:1–3 Samson Wants a Philistine Wife

3... *“Get her for me, for she pleases me well.”* What Samson says to his father summarizes the problem. Listen again to the end of verse 3; he says, “Get her for me, for she pleases me well.” Samson is a man who lives by faith in God, but sometimes this judge lives by faith in self. Listen to a summary of the Book of Judges, found at the very end of the Book, “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Jdg. 21:25). This is like our age. We struggle between wanting to live as God directs, and with what we want. We want to find a church that we like. Wanting to find a church shows that we recognize what God has said about the church, but we often let our tastes overrule what God says. We want to find a spouse who pleases us. God created marriage, so by wanting to marry we recognize His work, but we want out of the marriage what pleases us rather than thinking of pleasing our spouses.

Jun. 2 Jdg. 14:4 It Is of the Lord

4 *But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD...* This does not mean that Samson is right even as the men who crucified Christ were wrong, although God’s plan was for His Son to die in that manner. God is using Samson to save Israel from the Philistines. It is certainly possible that Samson is doing this at God’s direction. Here is why. Hebrews 11:32 mentions Samson as one of those who by faith did wonderful exploits. Romans 10:17 reveals that faith comes by hearing the word of God. Therefore, God told Samson something about defeating the Philistines. The question is: is Samson getting this Philistine woman part of the plan?

Jun. 3 Jdg. 14:5–7 Samson Tears Apart a Lion

5, 6... *he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand...* This man’s strength, agility, and quickness are astounding, but it only happens because the Spirit of the Lord is upon Samson. Likewise, we can only defeat the lion that is after us by the Spirit of the Lord.

6, 7... *But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done...* Samson does not tell his parents because he is a humble man, or he knows that he will use this incident later, or he has touched a dead body and broken the Nazirite vow and does not want his parents to know. “Why didn’t Samson tell his parents? Because the lion was dead, and he was a Nazirite [sic]. He knows he’s blowing it right here—but it seemed so sweet; it seemed so right” (Courson).

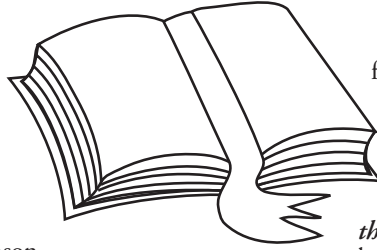
Jun. 4 Jdg. 14:8–18 A Riddle

8, 9 *After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion...* Enough time has passed for scavengers to eat the carcass, for it to dry, and for bees to produce honey. Samson loves his parents and gives them of the honey, blessing them even as they had blessed him.

10, 11 *So his father went down to the woman. And Samson gave a feast there...* He is alone when he goes to this feast of the Philistines. Either he does not have friends, or his Israelite friends do not want to go to the Philistines. Nevertheless, it will provide a good opportunity against the Philistines.

12, 13a *Then Samson said to them, “Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can correctly solve and explain it to me within the seven days of the feast...”* Even today, the bride and groom buy gifts for their wedding party. In this case, the groom has to get thirty gifts. Perhaps Samson is devising a way to avoid that huge expense. He might also be finding a way to defeat the Philistines. Samson is a man of great strength, but he is also a man of clever language.

Jun. 5 Jdg. 14:8–18 A Riddle



13b, 14 *And they said to him, “Pose your riddle...”* Now for three days they could not explain the riddle. Samson was like David. Both men did exploits, and both were thinkers. Samson is like the lion. He is strong as a lion. What comes out of this lion is sweet, and out of the mouth of Samson comes clever words.

15, 16... *“Entice your husband, that he may explain the riddle to us...”* Step back for a moment and think of what they say to her. They want to know the riddle so much, that they threaten her with a fiery death, if she does not entice her husband to tell the riddle! With these people, human life can be dispensed with at a whim. This is the mindset of a terrorist. She willingly manipulates her husband. She takes advantage of his love for her to serve her own selfish purposes. How many marriages today are hurt in the same way? The husband and the wife are not one. One holds his or her ground, and the children or other people know they can go to the other and get their way.

17, 18 *Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted...* The Philistine men approached Samson’s wife on either the fourth or seventh day of the feast. However, she had been pleading with him the whole week. She always wanted to know. It is just that later in the week the men approach her and want her to tell them.

Jun. 6 Jdg. 14:19 The Spirit of the Lord Works

19 *Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men...* This is the third time that the Spirit of the Lord has come upon Samson. Therefore, he can easily take on thirty men. This is nothing compared to his later exploits. When a person lives by faith, the number of the enemy, and the power of the enemy is no match for that person.

Jdg. 14:20 His Wife Is Given to His Best Man

20 *And Samson’s wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man.* She belongs to Samson. This is not right and they will pay for it.

See the paradox of the life of Samson, “...he emerges primarily as a heroic individual whose major preoccupation is loving Philistine women and fighting Philistine men” (James S. Ackerman, p. 140). See his paradox as our paradox: We simultaneously love the world and fight it. Subsequently our lives are often in turmoil as his often is.

Spring of the Caller

Can God only save us from great difficulties, but not small ones?

Jun. 7 Judges 15

God does the great works. When we are converted, He forgives us of all our past sin. When we die, He takes us to heaven. Can God do the smaller works? Can He take care of me between the times that I am converted, die, and go to heaven? Samson has his faults, but Hebrews 11:32 holds him up as an example of faith for us to imitate because he understands that God works in the great and the small.

Jun. 8 Jdg. 15:1, 2 Samson’s Wife

1, 2 *After a while, in the time of wheat harvest, it happened that Samson visited his wife...* The woman’s father misunderstood Samson’s departure. Then he tries what Laban did to Jacob by giving Samson another daughter. Observe the father’s control of the marriage of his daughter. First Corinthians 7:36–38 preserves this custom for Christians. This should be no surprise because the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is family-oriented. Moreover, Leviticus 18:18 prohibited an Israelite from marrying a woman while her sister was alive. This was true for marrying brothers. Remember the wives of Jacob. Of course, his marriage was before this law. Nevertheless, it illustrates what can happen. Samson has every right, therefore, to his wife, whom her father has given to his best man.

Jun. 9 Jdg. 15:3–5 Samson Destroys Wheat Fields

3–5 *And Samson said to them, “This time I shall be blameless regarding*

the Philistines if I harm them...” By arson, Samson does great agricultural, hence, economic damage to the Philistines. Remember that God is using Samson to begin delivering Israel from the Philistines. Numbers chapter 35 implies that a family member of a murder victim could or would do something of this nature.

Jdg. 15:6–8 They Burn Samson’s Wife

6 *Then the Philistines said, “Who has done this?” And they answered, “Samson...”* The Philistines burn Samson’s wife and father-in-law to death. For what reason do they burn her and her father? What happens to their fields with the devastating fire prompts them to burn these two people. However, the woman committed adultery, aided by her father. The Philistines fully recognized the validity of the marriage between Samson and this woman. This shocks us because we have grown accustomed to adultery, even the kind practiced here, when one spouse leaves and marries another. This happens so much, even in the church, without any consequence, that we merely express disappointment as our strongest negative reaction. Remember what the Scriptures teach. Read Matthew 19:9 and Romans 7:1–3. “To avoid this menace, she had betrayed her husband; and by that unprincipled conduct, eventually exposed herself to the horrid doom which, at the sacrifice of conjugal fidelity, she had sought to escape [Jud 14:15]” (Jamieson).

Jun. 10 Jdg. 15:6–8 They Burn Samson’s Wife

7, 8 *Samson said to them, “Since you would do a thing like this, I will surely take revenge on you...”* What does attacking “hip and thigh” mean? He easily accomplished this deed.

Jdg. 15:9–13

Judah Gives Samson to the Philistines

9–11 *... “As they did to me, so I have done to them.”* While Samson should not have married this Philistine woman, she was his wife. Therefore, they were one. That is why he said that what they had done to him, so he did to them. They burned his wife, he burned their fields.

12, 13 *But they said to him, “We have come down to arrest you...”* This sounds similar to American pressure on the Taliban in Afghanistan to hand over Osama bin Laden. “This is a pitiful sight to behold—God’s people siding with the enemy against a judge of Israel” (Jesse Whitlock, *Denton Lectures*). The tribe of Judah was not thinking because they were fearful. Samson is more powerful than the Philistines. However, Judah fears the Philistines. Judah does not see that with Samson they have greater power. When fear rules the heart, we cannot see clearly.

Jun. 11 Jdg. 15:14–17 Samson Kills a Thousand Men

14, 15 *... Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him...* “... a la Trojan horse! What thoughts must have raced in the minds of the Philistines at the sight of bursting cords and bands!” (Whitlock). Do you remember Judges 3:31? “After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed six hundred men of the Philistines with an ox goad; and he also delivered Israel.” Now, Samson kills 1,000 men with a jawbone! Later a boy with a stone kills a nine foot nine inch Philistine warrior! In each case, the Philistines dominated the Israelites. When the Spirit of the Lord is upon Shamgar, Samson, and David, they defeat the enemy with simple weapons. We may not have much, but if you will entrust yourself, your talents, your time, your energy, and your things to the Lord, He will do marvelous things with you. First Corinthians 1:26–29 shows what God has already done by placing us in the church. We live in the Kingdom of Christ. Were we great before having this blessing? An ox goad, a jawbone, a stone, and a cross: What do you *have* that the Spirit of God can use? Are you foolish, weak, base, or despised? What *are* you that the Spirit of God can use? Shamgar, Samson, and David won with crude weapons because they lived by faith, not by fear. How do you live?

Jun. 12 Jdg. 15:14–17

Samson Kills a Thousand Men

16, 17 *Then Samson said: “With the jawbone of a donkey...”* What an amazing feat for one man to kill 1,000 men! Clearly as verse 14 indicates, this happened because the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson mightily. Therefore, Zechariah 4:10 asks a good question, “For who has despised the day of small things?” That is, do not despise the day of small things, because God is not limited by what we have or what we are. “The full effect of Samson’s exuberant ditty is difficult to reproduce in English because it is based on a play of words on a Hebrew homonym which means both ‘ass

and ‘heap.’ Moffat’s translation is helpful: ‘With the jawbone of an ass I have piled them in a mass’” (Roehrs).

Jun. 13 Jdg. 15:18, 19

God Through Great and Small Events

18 *Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the LORD...* Samson knows that God saves in the greater events, and that He can save in the smaller. “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32). Second Chronicles chapters 14 and 16 show that King Asa only relied upon God for the great things. (Read 2 Chr. 14:8–12; 16:7–9, 12.) Do we seek God for the larger problems of life, but fail to consult Him about the smaller ones?

19 *So God split the hollow place that is in Lehi...* Twice God gave Israel water from a rock during the days of Moses. God does it for Samson also. God works wonders when we do not see the possibility. This has been the story of the Judges and of Samson. What can God do for you? Are you ready to glorify Him for it?

Jun. 14 Jdg. 15:20 Samson Does Well

20 *And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.* “It was a time of peace, a time of prosperity. For twenty years, Samson did real well. When you think of Samson, please don’t only remember his sins. He was a man who was mightily used by God, who had a real love for God, and who is marked in the New Testament as one of the giants of faith (Hebrews 11:32)” (Courson). There are things in the life of Samson that teach us what not to do, but as Courson’s comments show, there are things in Samson’s life that teach us what to do. If we live by faith, as Samson did, we can fight anyone and anything that opposes, regardless of their strength and numbers, and win. Therefore, cry out to God in a similar way as Samson in verse 18.

Samson: A Man of Strength and Weakness

How can a man be so strong, but be so weak?

Jun. 15 Judges 16

1–3 *... he arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up...* Samson boldly goes to a city alone where he knows the people want to kill him. Jesus did the same thing when He went up to Jerusalem. Why do the Philistines wait until the morning to attack Samson after he has rested fully? “Apparently the Gazites did not know the exact location of Samson in the city. It was decided to set an ambush for Samson at the city gates which were locked at night for protection. The plot was to kill Samson in the morning” (Whitlock). This incident, like his other exploits, shows both his strength and his endurance. Exactly what does he carry? These gates are not like the gates to a picket fence. They are gates to a city. How far away is this hill? The distance carrying that weight is phenomenal. Moreover, he takes them to the top of the hill! Courson says the distance was 38 miles and the rise in elevation was 3,300 feet! Why does he do this instead of fighting the Philistines?

Jun. 16 Jdg. 16:4, 5 Oh, Delilah

4, 5 *Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah...* Samson must not have been a physically strong appearing man, at least not to match what he was able to do, or the Philistines would not have been looking for the secret of his strength.

Jdg. 16:6–14 The Secret Remains a Secret

6–9 *So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me where your great strength lies...”* The love of money moves her to betray the one who loves her. Delilah may have done this “... in a sportive manner, to try whether he was jesting or in earnest” (Jamieson).

10–14 *Then Delilah said to Samson, “Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with...”* Note the different ways she tries to manipulate him:

Verse 6 – a simple plea to share a secret

Verse 10 – she claims to be the victim

Verse 13 – she repeats the part of the victim

Verse 15 – she questions his love, and claims to be a victim

Actually, it is all in the reverse. He is the victim and she does not love him. Males are not the only ones who say prove your love. Interestingly, he keeps letting her do these things. He is a clever man, but his attraction to her blinds him. Love for Samson does not move Delilah, that is, wanting to get to know him better, but she is doing it for the love of money. First Timothy 6:9, 10 shows what happens when money becomes our god.

Jun. 17 Jdg. 16:15–17

Delilah Tries a New Approach

15–17 Then she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me?...” “So constantly did Delilah pester him, Samson wanted to die—which, ironically, was the end result of her pestering” (Courson). “...conscious of how completely he was enslaved by his passion for her, she assailed him with a succession of blandishing arts, till she at length discovered the coveted secret” (Jamieson).

Jdg. 16:18–20 The Lord Leaves Samson

18–20 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines... Take note: Samson did not know that his strength and God were gone, showing that God being with an individual is not necessarily miraculous. Nor is it a feeling. Samson was asleep in the body and in the soul. He did not know that Delilah had his hair cut, and so, he did not know that God had cut his strength. “When you have given over the practice of stated prayer, you gradually become weaker without knowing it. Samson did not know he had lost his strength till the Philistines came upon him; you will think yourselves the men you used to be, till suddenly your adversary will come furiously upon you, and you will as suddenly fall” (Jamieson). Moreover, when Samson broke other parts of his Nazirite vow, nothing happened. Perhaps he thought that this time nothing would happen either. Do we not think the same way? We do something wrong and do not suffer for it. Therefore, we reason: God did not see it; God has overlooked it; the church has been too strict in its interpretation of the Bible; etc. Here are three passages for the reader to consider: Psa. 50:16–21; Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9.

Jun. 18 Jdg. 16:21–25 Samson Disgraced

21 Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes... “There are three things sin will do for you:

- (1) It will take you farther than you wanted to go.
- (2) It will keep you longer than you wanted to stay.
- (3) It will cost you more than you wanted to pay!” (Whitlock).

Samson had often sinned with his eyes. Now he loses them. Yet, his spiritual eyes began to open again.

22 However, the hair of his head began to grow again... “It is probable that he had now reflected on his folly; and becoming a sincere penitent, renewed his Nazirite vow. ‘His hair grew together with his repentance, and his strength with his hairs’...” (Jamieson).

23–25 Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god... This now became a contest between Dagon and Yahweh, and the God of Israel was not about to be shown up by a dead and false god.

Jun. 19 Jdg. 16:26–31 Samson’s Greatest Victory

26–30 ...And he pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it... See what Samson did: He prayed as though everything depended upon God and worked as though everything depended upon himself. Therefore, he was able to push down a temple! Read Revelation 2:10.

31a And his brothers and all his father’s household came down and took him... Manoah did not see all the faults and exploits of his beloved son. The rest of his family went courageously to enemy territory and retrieved his body.

31b He had judged Israel twenty years. Try to remember these last words that the story writer of the Book of Judges writes about Samson. God used Samson because he was a faithful and righteous man in many ways, which is why the 11th chapter of Hebrews holds him up as an example of faith, but the biblical story also shows that Samson was a man of like passions with us. Therefore, let us not judge him self-righteously, but let us learn from him how to live life and how not to live life.

When Everyone Does What is Right in His Own Eyes, They Pervert God’s Religion

Jun. 20 Jdg. 17

In Deuteronomy 12:1–8, Moses taught the people that when they entered the Land of Canaan they were not to practice idolatry. He also revealed why people become idolatrous (We will see the same thing in the Book of Judges). It stems from self-righteousness, that is, people determine what is right in their own eyes instead of what is right in God’s eyes. In Deuteronomy 12:4, Moses implied that Israel would not abandon God totally for idols, but sometimes they would mix the practices of idolatry with their worship of the true God. That is a dangerous combination, as we shall see. Therefore, the Lord was clear that they were to destroy idolatry. They were not to use any of the implements of idolatry in worshiping God. They were to worship God how and where He said to do it. They were not to do what was right in their own eyes. In the last five chapters of the Book of Judges, whose incidents happened shortly after Moses spoke the words of Deuteronomy chapter 12, they violated every single one of the precepts. When we get done with these last five chapters, you will see that what Israel did was evil in the sight of the Lord, and you will understand why He gave Israel over to oppressive enemies repeatedly. We are now introduced to a man known as Micah, “...a man who wanted riches, religion, and respectability. But playing by his own rules, we’ll see how he ends up losing all three” (Courson).

Jun. 21 Jdg. 17:1, 2 Repentance

1, 2 Now there was a man from the mountains of Ephraim, whose name was Micah... Most of what we have heard from the Book of Judges has been complimentary of the tribe of Ephraim. Joshua was from the tribe of Ephraim (2:9). Ephraim helped Ehud deliver Israel from Moab (3:27). Deborah was a judge in Ephraim (4:5). Ephraim helped save Israel from the Canaanites (5:14). Ephraim helped Gideon fight the Midianites (7:24). Gideon credited Ephraim for doing a great work (8:2). The judge Tola was from Issachar but decided to live in Ephraim (10:1). The judge Abdon was buried in Ephraim (12:15). There was also the sad time that the tribe opposed the judge Jephthah so severely that a war broke out and the tribe was defeated. Now we find another sad thing in Ephraim. Micah stole 1100 shekels of silver from his mother, or more accurately from God. Therefore, she put a curse on the silver. “Outward losses drive good people to their prayers, but bad people to their curses” (Henry). Micah confesses to his mother. She blesses him. This all sounds good, so far.

Jun. 22 Jdg. 17:3–5 Self-Made Religion Begins

3–5 ... “I had wholly dedicated the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son, to make a carved image...” She had wholly dedicated the silver to the Lord, designating a use, which is for her son to make an image! Thus, he receives the silver back, but making an image violates Deuteronomy chapter 12. A mother encourages her son in his own religion, which was really a perversion of the true religion! The son does not abandon Yahweh God completely. Micah and his mother just wanted to do things their way. He liked the idea of worshiping God, and Micah liked some of the ways God commanded, but in other ways, Micah did not. The sins of Micah and his mother were:

- The creation of idols
- Their own shrine or temple
- Their own ephod (A garment covering the chest)

He makes one of his non-levitical sons a priest. Often when parents lose a child to sin, and the child repents, the parents compromise to accommodate their returned child. Did you notice that she only used 200 shekels? When the silver was gone, 100% was dedicated to the Lord. When it returns, less than 20% is for the Lord. What happened to the rest? Was she lying about the 100%? Did she become greedy?

Jun. 23 Jdg. 17:6 Self-Righteousness

6 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. This is an insightful insertion by the writer of the Book of Judges. Since there was no king in the days of the judges, self-righteousness reigned. Here is an important distinction between the period of the

judges and the period of the kings. For the most part, judges fought against outside enemies of Israel. For the most part, kings fought idolatry within Israel. In the first sixteen chapters of the Book of Judges, we see eight times that the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord (2:11; 3:7; 3:12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1). Starting with chapter 17, the writer does not use that expression. Four times, he says there was no king, so, everyone did what was right in his own eyes. The content of the last five chapters of the Book of Judges covers a time prior to the judges or simultaneous to them. When people do what is right in their own eyes, they do evil in the eyes of the Lord. Therefore, the Scriptures warn, "There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death" (Pro. 14:12); "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts" (Pro. 21:2); and, "O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23).

Jun. 24 Jdg. 17:7–13 Superstition

7–10a *Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah; he was a Levite...* How could this young man be a Levite of the family of Judah? Jamieson says, "Men of the tribe of Levi might connect themselves, as Aaron did (Ex 6:23), by marriage with another tribe; and this young Levite belonged to the tribe of Judah, by his mother's side, which accounts for his being in Bethlehem, not one of the Levitical cities" (Jamieson). He starts looking for his own place because the Levites were not given a section of land. Therefore, Micah offered this Levite to be a priest and to be a father to the older Micah, because he evidently saw the Levite as being greater spiritually. He promised to pay the Levite: Ten shekels of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and to maintain his sustenance.

10a, 11 *So the Levite went in...* Sadly, the Levite accepted the offer. The Levites were the teachers in Israel. This man knew all his life the Law of God and the history of Israel. He was old enough to go out on his own, thus, he should have been teaching the truth. However, that does not always happen, does it?

Jun. 25 Jdg. 17:7–13 Superstition

12, 13 *So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest...* What was Micah thinking? When he said, "Now I know..." the writer of Judges was demonstrating his point of verse 6 that everyone in Israel was doing what was right in his own eyes. Micah's knowledge was not based on the word of God. Claiming to know does not mean that we truly know, even if it feels right. "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered" (Pro. 28:26). Micah's self-deception was fulfilled because he was doing well. He concluded that God was with him. Doing well does not mean that God endorses the way we are living, for the rebellious often do well. Micah had already perverted the religion of God, yet Micah believes that having a Levite priest will cause God to bless the house of Micah, because he had moved a little closer to the true religion. Micah viewed religion as superstitious and external. It was like the people who think, Okay, God, I have shown up for worship, bless me; Okay, God, I am reading Your word daily, bless me; as though these things are good luck charms. Being right in one thing led Micah to believe that he was right in all things. He failed to realize that we may have many of the right outward signs, but still be out of God's grace. If we pervert God's religion in one thing, where will we stop? Do not be pleased with a partial religion.

**When Everyone Does What is
Right in His Own Eyes:
False Religion Spreads
Once God's religion has been mingled with man's
teachings, it spreads quickly**

Jun. 26 Judges 18

"The infection of false religion is easily transmitted" (Goebel Music). It is amazing to see idolatry, which is a gross perversion of God, passed on from mother to son, to a Levite, to the tribe of Dan. Why did no one oppose what was happening?

Jdg. 18:1a No Leadership

1a *In those days there was no king in Israel.* We have already been told this once (17:6), we will be reminded again in 19:1, and 21:25 will repeat

it. Why does the writer remind us of this situation four times? What pattern are we seeing in the Book of Judges? Without a king, the people sinned by following what was right in their own eyes. There would be a judge to help them get back on the right track. When the judge died, another one did not immediately replace him. Thus, Israel went into sin. When they did get a king, one immediately replaced another, but sin was still a problem. What was Israel's problem? When they had good leaders, it showed them the need for leaders and their need for the leadership of God. Having bad leaders showed them the failures of following their own hearts. The problem is the heart. Who is king of your life? Is it you? Is it the American government? Is it Jesus Christ?

Jun. 27 Jdg. 18:1b–6 God Is with You

1b–6... *So they said to him, "Please inquire of God, that we may know whether the journey on which we go will be prosperous"...* The men from Dan do not question why the Levite was not functioning according to the Law of Moses! It was good that they wanted to inquire of God because we are ignorant and shortsighted, needing God's guidance. God knows all and is willing to give wisdom. Then again, they were asking the wrong person to inquire of God for them. "Far too many today 'pass by Shiloh' and seek their oracle in some other place, just as these Danites did. Why on earth do men ask of one who is a traitor to both the religion of God and to God Himself, questions that pertain to spiritual safety?" (Goebel Music).

Jun. 28 Jdg. 18:7–10 The Dangers of Isolation

7... *they dwelt safely, in the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure...* They were quiet and secure, but the reading leads us to believe that this is not a good thing. "It seems that they cared for no one and nobody cared about them. This might be seen as a city where 'me, myself, and I' was the only concern" (Goebel Music). It is not good because they kept themselves separate from other people. This means that no ruler could put them to shame, but it also meant they had no help in case of attack. America has been quiet and secure, but we have not isolated ourselves from other countries. Now we see how others have backed us and supported us during our time of need after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Likewise, seek the fellowship of others. Seek Christian friends. Seek friendships with people in the world.

Jun. 29 Jdg. 18:7–10 The Dangers of Isolation

8–10... *"Arise... Do not hesitate to go, and enter to possess the land..."* They were in the homeland of Samson. Just like the spies that Joshua sent, they bring back a good report, encouraging the people to take the land, because God had given it to them. However, they were different from the ten spies whom Moses sent. They warned their brethren not to be idle. Why be idle when God is ready to pour out His blessings? The tribe of Dan had been hesitant to take possession of their inheritance. Listen, if God has promised us something, we can take possession of it immediately. If God offers to you forgiveness, peace, or any other blessing, do not hesitate to take possession of it and enjoy it to the fullest.

Jdg. 18:11–15

What Is to Be Done About Idolatry?

11–15... *"Now therefore, consider what you should do"...* Did they see the valuable silver that was there? Did they see gods to benefit them? Either way, the silver images were not theirs. The command from God through Moses was to destroy the idols and the idolaters.

Jun. 30 Jdg. 18:16–21 Perverted Religion Spreads

16–19... *"Is it better for you to be a priest to the household of one man, or that you be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?"* What was one priest to do against 600 armed men? "See what little care this sorry priest took of his gods. See how impotent these sorry gods were, that could not keep themselves from being stolen...[the Danites] must have gods to go before them, not of their own making indeed, but, which was as bad, of their own stealing" (Henry). "Is it possible that these people could put their trust in silver stolen from a mother by her son, cursed by the mother, cast and graven into a lifeless image, stolen from its owner, manipulated by a Levite for filthy lucre, attended by a kidnapped priest?" (Roehrs).

20 *So the priest's heart was glad...* Since the Levite perverted God's religion with Micah in Ephraim. Why not with 600 men from the tribe of Dan? There was more money and more prestige with the latter! This is what got Israel into trouble so often in the Book of Judges. †

Angels Behind the Scenes

Do you know what heaven is doing on your behalf?



By Don Ruhl

Something, in your favor, is going on behind the scenes. Be encouraged to continue with the battles in your life, because the Lord uses His heavenly host to make all things work together for good.

You cannot see it happening, but you may see the results and Scripture says it is happening. These are non-miraculous events.

Genesis 24:40

But he said to me, “The LORD, before whom I walk, will send His angel with you and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my family and from my father’s house” (Gen. 24:40).

This angel was not visible to Abraham’s servant, which is why Abraham made this explanation. This is how God carries out His providence. There were no miracles along the way. Miracles suspend nature, but providence works within nature.

Exodus 32:34

Now therefore, go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin (Ex. 32:34).

There is no record in the Old Testament that

a visible angel was in front of Israel showing them the way, or making things easier. Yet, the angel was responsible for the survival of the Israelites.

Second Samuel 5:24

And it shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall advance quickly. For then the LORD will go out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines (2 Sam. 5:24).

David wanted to know by what way he should attack the Philistines. He would still fight, but somehow the Lord, perhaps through His angels, would insure that the fighting would go in David’s favor. Miracles were not involved. If miracles had been involved, David would not have fought, but unusual activity that defied the laws of nature would have happened.

The marchers up in the trees insured that the Philistines did not gain the advantage or that David gained the advantage, or both. All that we can say is angels were working behind the scenes, or up in the mulberry trees.

Second Samuel 24:15, 16

This passage is different than the other ones because it shows an angel behind the scenes punishing. David had made the great mistake of thinking that his military strength was in the number of soldiers. God rebuked the king for his error and gave him a choice of three punishments. David opted for the one in which God meted out the punishment. In three days the Lord lowered the numbers of the army of Israel by 70,000. Then

we get a glimpse that it is an angel doing these things behind the scenes.

So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel from the morning till the appointed time. From Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men of the people died. And when the angel stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the destruction, and said to the angel who was destroying the people, “It is enough; now restrain your hand.” And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (2 Sam. 24:15, 16).

First Kings 22:22, 23

This one is also different, but it shows a spirit, possibly an angel, working against someone who was wicked, so the spirit was working on behalf of the righteous.

The prophets told King Ahab just what he wanted to hear. However, this text reveals that it was actually a lying spirit, from the spiritual world, in the mouth of all his prophets. These prophets thought they were saying what they wanted to say. It was not apparent that the Lord was working against King Ahab by means of these false prophets, but the prophet Micaiah revealed it.

The LORD said to him, “In what way?” So he said, “I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.” And the LORD said, “You shall persuade him, and also prevail.

Continued on page 8

Go out and do so.” [Then the prophet said to King Ahab,] Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you (1 Kin. 22:22, 23).

Second Kings 6:17

The Syrian army was pursuing the Israelites, but just when the Syrians thought they would make a sneak attack on the Israelites they got away. So the King of Syria thought that one of his advisers must be a spy, telling the king of Israel when to flee. One adviser was wise and he told the Syrian King that there was a prophet in Israel who knew everything that the king of Syria was doing. This prophet even knew the words that the Syrian King spoke in the privacy of his bedroom. So the King found where this prophet was. The prophet was Elisha. The Syrian army surrounded the city where Elisha and his servant were staying. When they arose in the morning, Elisha's servant saw this vast army of the enemy and he was frightened. Elisha told the servant that he did not need to fear, because those who were with Elisha and the servant outnumbered the Syrians. To prove this, here is what Elisha did, and what happened afterwards.

And Elisha prayed, and said, “LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (2 Kin. 6:17).

Psalms 34:7

This is a fit commentary on what we read about Elisha, or perhaps it is the other way around. What is reassuring about this passage is it says that the experience of Elisha is not restricted to him. Horses and chariots of fire also surround us as we fight the Lord's battles.

The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them. (Psa. 34:7).

Daniel 10:13, 20–11:1

“But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia”... Then he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come. But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince. Also in the first year of Darius the Mede, I, even I, stood up to confirm and strengthen him.)” (Dan. 10:13, 20–11:1).

This shows that sometimes it is the Lord Himself who works behind the scenes. We cannot see what the Lord is doing. Yet, He works. Here He fights with the prince of Persia. The Lord could easily overwhelm this prince, but the Lord fights on the prince's level. To what extent does the Lord work behind the scenes with nations today, with the church, with the people in our lives, etc.?

Matthew 18:10

Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven (Mat. 18:10).

Do not despise a little child, because in heaven their angels always see the face of God. The angels are in heaven. The angels are watching the face of God. The implication is that the angels will testify to God what you do to children. Therefore, watch how you treat them. Do you want an angel to tell God that you despised a child, or harmed or misled him?

Luke 15:10

Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents (Luk. 15:10).

Angels are aware of what is going on here, and when they see a sinner repent, the angels rejoice. Heaven noticed your repentance.

First Corinthians 11:10

For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels (1 Cor. 11:10).

Paul was explaining why women should wear a veil during the worship of the first century church. As he goes through his explanation, there is a curious reference to the angels. Paul is discussing the worship service, so it must be that he was teaching angels are either: 1. Present during our worship services, or 2. They are observing from heaven. The point is improper attire during the worship service offends the angels.

First Timothy 5:21

I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality (1 Tim. 5:21).

Angels are aware of what Christians do. We are charged in the presence of angels to do things without prejudice. Perhaps they are watching to make sure that we are impartial, that we are following the teachings of Christ to treat everyone the same.

Hebrews 1:13, 14

But to which of the angels has He ever said:

“Sit at My right hand,

Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”?

Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? (Heb. 1:13, 14).

The writer made a comparison between Christ and the angels, that He is superior to them. One of the arguments is that angels are ministering spirits, who obey Christ on our behalf. What do they do on our behalf? That question is not answered by this text, just the fact that they do minister on our behalf.

Hebrews 12:22

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels (Heb. 12:22).

The Book of Hebrews demonstrates that everything in the New Testament is superior to the Old Testament. Rather than appearing before Mt. Sinai, we appear before Mt. Zion. Included in this is that we are before innumerable angels.

The Book of Revelation

Each church had an angel. Revelation 2:1 is typical of the letters written to the other six churches,

To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, “These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands” (Rev. 2:1).

The purpose of the Book of Revelation is to show us what is going on behind the scenes, and angels are part of that activity. Much of what God wants done—as the Book of Revelation shows—He uses angels to accomplish. Yet, this cannot be seen, which is why this Book is called Revelation. The Book of Revelation mentions angels more than any other Bible book. They are mentioned 72 times in the last book of the Bible. Whereas, Luke, the book with the next highest number only has 24 references.

What Shall We Do?

In Ephesians chapter 6, Paul urges us to put on the whole armor of God, but the armor is spiritual. Why do we need this spiritual armor?

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12).

There is angelic activity behind the scenes for our behalf, but there is also wicked spiritual activity behind the scenes that is against us. We had better be prepared for it by putting on this armor, while the Lord does His part with the angels.

Angels are working behind the scenes for our benefit. Thus God is working behind the scenes for our benefit. God cares about us. ☩



Meditation Tips

Edited By Don Ruhl

The Bible Is the Authority of the Church; The Church Is Not the Authority of the Bible By Troy M. Cummings

Question: Do John 20:30 and 21:25 prove that the Bible only cannot be a sufficient guide to the teaching of Christ?

Answer: No, they do not. Properly understood, in their setting, they teach just the opposite. A certain church constantly quotes John 20:30 and 21:25 to prove that the Bible is incomplete and insufficient as our spiritual guide. They believe that some “living voice,” or human “Supreme Court,” must be used to fill

in this deficiency of God’s word. It would seem that any one could see the error of this idea.

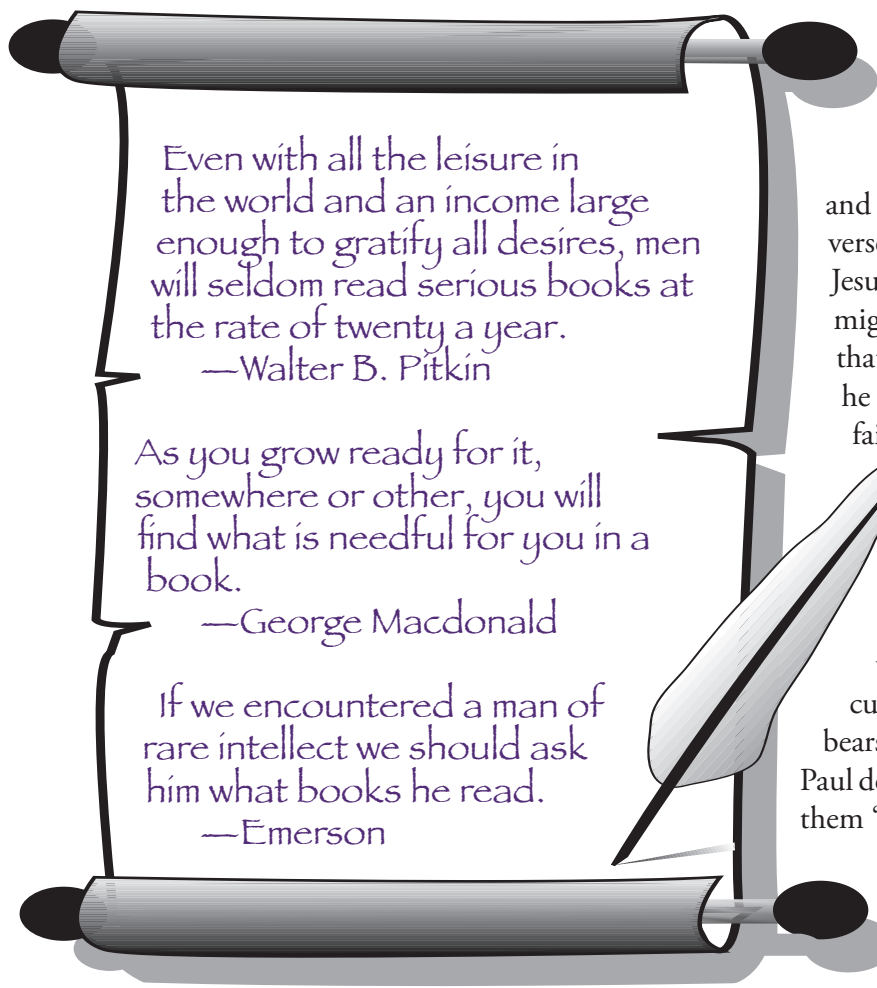
First, do we worship a God who is so weak and unwise as to be unable to give us a complete Bible?

Second, if God Himself left us an incomplete and deficient guidebook, is it reasonable to think that we are greater and wiser than God, and can help God out of His difficulty with our “living voice” or human wisdom?

If you will take any standard translation of the Bible, Protestant or Catholic, and carefully study John 20:30, 31 and 21:25 you will be convinced that John was not trying to tell us that the Bible is incomplete as our guide book. It is noteworthy that our religious neighbors never quote verse 31: they stop at verse 31 and draw a conclusion that is contradicted by the very next verse, “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.” Though John tells us that he did not record everything that Jesus did (verse 30), he does claim that what he wrote is *sufficient* to produce faith in Christ to the obtaining of “life through His name.”

Friends, what more do we need? You see now why you must be on your guard and study the Bible for yourself, lest you be led astray by perverted Bible quotations.

Another very noteworthy thing is that this church which exalts itself above the Bible never quotes or discusses Second Timothy 3:14–17, even though the passage bears directly on this subject. In the plainest way the apostle Paul declares that the Sacred Scriptures are so complete that by them “the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Why should any church constantly teach that the Bible alone is not our guide? Because they know that reading the Holy Scriptures alone you would never get a picture of their church. †



Even with all the leisure in the world and an income large enough to gratify all desires, men will seldom read serious books at the rate of twenty a year.
—Walter B. Pitkin

As you grow ready for it, somewhere or other, you will find what is needful for you in a book.
—George Macdonald

If we encountered a man of rare intellect we should ask him what books he read.
—Emerson

Interesting Insights

“Wisdom is to be found with God, and nowhere else; and unless the quest for wisdom brings a man to his knees in awe and reverence, knowing his own helplessness to make himself wise, wisdom remains for him a closed book.”
(Lawrence E. Toombs, “Old Testament Theology and the Wisdom Literature,” *Journal of Bible and Religion* 23(1952): 195).

“We who trust the Bible as sufficient for life and godliness say that the Bible is the sole authoritative source of understanding the human condition, including values, and the sole authoritative source of prescribing how one is to live”

(Martin and Deidre Bobgan, “Philip Yancy ‘Addicted’ to the Recovery Movement? Part One,” *PsychoHeresy Awareness Letter*, May–June 2001, Volume 9, Number 3, page 1).

“Nobody wants to hear a celebrity complain”
(Jennifer Lopez, *Reader’s Digest*, March 2005, page 5).
Why is it that nobody wants to hear a celebrity complain? After you answer that question, answer this one, Why does God not want to hear a Christian complain?

“Did you ever watch a little child take a lesson in model drawing? Never two strokes of the pencil without a glance at the model. And the first law and the last law of the imitation of Christ is just this—‘looking unto Jesus.’”

George Jackson

“Marriage doesn’t fail to meet the demands of people, people fail to meet the demands of marriage.”

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