

# The BEACON

Published by the Newton church of Christ  
Meeting at: St. James Church Rd and Glendale Ave

Vol. 23, No. 11

Edited by John Cripps

November 2009



## Wake Up Christian Parents! - By Cougan Collins

We have a major spiritual crisis in our nation. The latest polls show that 7 out of every 10 children raised in the church are leaving the church by their second year of college. The two main reasons for this is worldly influences and lazy parents.

Many parents have forgotten that is their Christian duty to raise their children up in the way of the Lord (**Deut. 6:6; Proverbs. 22:6; Ephesians 6:4**). If you are not teaching your children about God by your example or teaching them the importance of God's Word, then you may lose your children to the world. If the current trend continues, the church will die out in America.

We can defy the current polls by taking action and making time to teach our children about God in our homes. We should not expect our children to get all their education about God at church because it is not enough. Your children are being influenced by world in many ways. For example, when you send your children to public school, not only are they taught the fundamentals of education, they are taught that evolution is a fact instead of theory. They are being taught to think that we should not oppose worldly views. Instead, we should accept them and just call them alternative lifestyles. They are also being taught there is no absolute truth and many other things that are contrary to God's Word. Many of these teachings are coming from their textbooks.

The world understands that if they can train our children with information like this, that they can change our nation. Adolf Hitler understood this, which is why he said: *"Let me control the textbooks and I will control the state..."* During a speech he delivered on November 6, 1939 Hitler said: *"When an opponent declares, 'I will not come over to your side,' I calmly say, 'Your child belongs to us already.... What are you? You will pass on. Your descendants, however, now stand in the new camp. In a short time they will know nothing else but this new community.'"* Not only do we have to combat worldly views our children are learning from their textbooks, they are being influenced by their worldly friends. Peer pressure is very powerful because most do not want to stand out from what is popular. On top of this, they are being influenced by Hollywood and by the Internet.

If we want to combat all these worldly influences, it is imperative we get involved in our children's life. Stop relying on others to teach them about God because God has given you that responsibility. Before you can teach them, you must be committed to serving God yourself. You cannot tell children how they should not do certain things if you are doing them. Your children will follow you actions, not your empty words. In other words, practice what you preach. When your children see your

dedication to God and how you strive to be a good example, it will make a deeper impact on them.

One generation can either cripple the church or strengthen it. The next generation is in your hands, so I hope you will wake up and take on the responsibility God has given you. Otherwise, we might hear the following words: *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. (Hosea 4:6).*

## Is the Bible a "Blueprint Book?"

By Gardner Hall

The following phrase has become popular among some brethren, "the Bible is not a blueprint book." In one sense, the statement is true. The Bible is generally not laid out technically like a "blueprint book," with precise lists of rules and measurements. Rather, it contains the history of Gods people, principles, illustrations and general instructions. Therefore, it is necessary to "mine" the scriptures and meditate upon them to extract its truths.

But though it is not literally a "blueprint book," the Word of God ...

\* Is called "the oracles of God," (**1 Peter 4:11**)

\* Provides "all things that pertain to life and godliness," (**2 Peter 1:3**)

\* "Is a lamp to our feet and a light to our pathway," (**Psalms 119:105**)

\* Reveals the commandments of the Lord. (**1 Corinthians 14:37**)

Though the Word of God it is not technically a "blueprint book" we should...

\* Rightly divide it and can do so. (**2 Timothy 3:16,17**) (God wouldn't ask us to do the impossible.)

\* not go "beyond what is written" in it. (**1 Corinthians 4:6**)

\* not add to it or take away from it." (**Revelation 22:18,19**)

\* Not go beyond the doctrine of Christ revealed in it. (**2 John 9**)

\* Do everything in the name of the Lord, that is, have His approval as revealed in the scriptures. (**Colossians 3:17**)

The basic teachings of Christ about how to become a Christian and how to worship Him as first century Christians did are simple and understandable, even though they aren't laid out like a "blueprint book." (**Ephesians 2:3,4**, etc.), Though there are difficult issues that usually deal with matters of individual application (**2 Peter 3:16**), such do not have to be divisive if dealt with on an individual basis and aren't imposed upon others (**Romans 14, 1 Cor. 8,9**). Therefore, though the Bible isn't technically a "blueprint book," it is still presumptuous to worship in a way that has no authority from the King (**1 Cor. 4:6; Romans 14:23**) It is still necessary to give loving warnings to those who deny the simple and basic truths about acceptance of God's salvation (**Acts 2:38; 22:16**, etc.).

Why has this phrase become popular? Is the phrase, "the Bible is not a blueprint book," used to imply that less scrutiny the Word of God is necessary, or that we don't really have to have Bible precedent to authorize our worship and work in God's kingdom? If such is the motivation behind the phrase, then a loving warning needs to be given. Such a spirit has always accompanied apostasies such as those that have resulted in the development of the traditional Roman Church in the second century and the Disciples of Christ denomination in the late 1800's. This spirit needs to be challenged with love because it will invariably lead to less

importance given to the Word, a distancing from Christ, and the formation of a liberal denomination like the "Christian Church, Disciples of Christ." We don't need more liberal denominations, but rather humble, sincere people who take the Word of God at face value and refuse to go beyond what is authorized in it, whether it called is a "blueprint book" or not. Such people will be simple Christians, just like the first followers of Jesus. That's still possible today!

## **That's Just Your Interpretation! - by Mark Larson**

That's just your interpretation! How many times has someone said that to you when you attempted to teach them the truth from the Scriptures? Rather than take the message of truth to heart, it is quickly dismissed as merely your opinion and not taken seriously at all.

If you have ever heard this before, you know that it is sort of like "hitting a brick wall." Further discussion of the truth with such a person can be very difficult. The potential for meaningful Bible study is not very promising.

What Is Your Interpretation? The best way to begin in your response to someone who says: "That's just your interpretation" is to hand the passage over to them and ask for their interpretation. An interpretation in Bible study is simply an explanation of the meaning of a particular passage of Scripture. Rather than be discouraged and give up, make this offer instead: "I am willing to hear your interpretation and correct my own position if I am wrong. What is it?" This demonstrates fairness as well as humility, both which are necessary for Bible study (**Proverbs 18:12-13**). Be open-minded and willing to hear any evidence that they might have for their beliefs and practices. Just as we hope

for positive change in the people we teach, we too must demonstrate a willingness to change our own beliefs and practices when we are corrected (e.g., **Acts 18:24-26**).

Speak in Terms of Evidence: When making the offer to listen to other people's interpretation of Scripture, be sure to include this request: "You must have evidence to support your interpretation over mine. What is it?" Before allowing an exchange of interpretations to take place, it is important to come to a mutual agreement that true, saving faith is based on the evidence or the teaching of the Scriptures. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (**Romans 10:17**).

We must speak of the importance of providing book, chapter, and verse for the beliefs that we hold (**1 Peter 4:11; Col. 3:17**). We must emphasize that a fair hearing must be given to all that God has said on the matter to get a proper understanding of God's will. When studying any subject, "the whole counsel of God" (**Acts 20:27**) should be sought in the pursuit for the truth. Passages must be examined in its proper context. Concordances and Hebrew or Greek Bible dictionaries are very helpful to gather even more evidence.

No Legitimate Interpretations? Sometimes people reject the truth because they are convinced that no interpretation of Scripture can be relied on as the truth. Many are convinced that every interpretation involves man's opinions and thus everything is spun, biased, or slanted to favor a particular doctrine, practice, or personal viewpoint.

Let us admit the fact that there are indeed many interpretations of Scripture offered today that are according to man's opinions that must be rejected (**2 Peter 3:15-17**). However, not all interpretations are false. There are real

differences between interpretations. Many will lead to eternal destruction, yet only the truth will lead to eternal life (**Matthew 7:13-14**).

Finding the truth requires a recognition that there is ultimately only one right interpretation of the Scriptures. There is only one faith (**Ephesians 4:5; Jude 3**) or one truth (**John 8:32; 17:17**) that God has revealed to us. God has promised us that we can know what the truth is (**1 Timothy 2:4; Ephesians 3:4**). These facts ought to bring hope to the skeptic who says there are no legitimate interpretations.

Will Any Interpretation of Scripture Do? Sometimes people take the opposite extreme and declare that though there is only one faith or truth, it is too confusing or difficult to find. Many people, in response to the multitude of religious groups and doctrines, conclude that almost any interpretation will do. Rather than rule out certain religious beliefs on the basis of Scripture, there is the desire to respect every belief as equal in merit or legitimacy. Many people want to "just get along" and do not want to debate or discuss their differences. The preferred "solution" of many is to just choose the interpretation that personally suits you best and call that "the truth."

Some Interpretations Are Better or More Plausible Than Others: The answer to any confusion or challenge that we may have in searching for the truth is not to choose just any interpretation of Scripture! Imagine the trouble we would have in our lives if we handled all of our decisions this way. For example, would we be willing to randomly choose a marriage partner? Would we choose just any car to drive or any house to live in? Would any of us be willing to invest our hard earned savings into just any type of investment? When we are sick, would we decide that just any medicine or

treatment will make us well? Of course not! In making any important decision in life, to choose wisely requires that we learn all that we can about the issue or problem that is at hand. The same is true in deciding what we should believe and practice in religion from the Scriptures.

So which interpretation of Scripture should one choose? To sift through the interpretations that are possible and decide on only one requires that we accept the interpretation that is most plausible, probable, or credible. Rather than foolishly accept just any interpretation of Scripture, let us choose the one that provides the most evidence (e.g., true to the context of the passage, in harmony with parallel passages on the same subject, true to the actual meaning of Bible words, etc.). "So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (**Ephesians 5:17**).

God Provides Us with Rules for Interpretation: Thankfully, God provides us with some assistance on how to interpret the Scriptures right in the Word itself! The Lord gives us the help we need to determine the truth for what we are to believe and practice in religion. There are four major rules He provides: (1) Direct statements or commands we must obey (e.g., **John 14:15; 2 Peter 3:1-2**); (2) Divinely approved examples we are to follow (e.g., **1 Peter 2:21; Philippians 3:17; Acts 2:42**); (3) Necessary implications, meaning conclusions we can make from what is implied in Scripture (e.g., **Matthew 22:41-46**); (4) Respect for the silence of God, meaning we restrict ourselves to what God has revealed in the Scriptures to determine His will (**Deut. 29:29**). We do not add to it nor take away from it (**Revelation 22:18-19**). Let us all be true to God and respect His word in the interpretation of the Scriptures