

Honesty and sincerity does not insulate us from judgment, though. One sure test of a man's sincerity is this: is he willing to study the issue? John said: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). The word is powerful (Heb. 4:12) and if a man will study any issue honestly, he will know the truth. What bothers me are brethren who are unwilling to speak up, content to discuss the issue only with those with whom they agree or with those whom they feel they can dominate. That is neither sincere nor honest. It is only cowardly, and Jesus puts cowards right up there with liars in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). Paul predicted that the time would come when people would not endure

sound doctrine, but would heap up for themselves teachers who would "tickle their ears" (II Timothy 4:3). It is disingenuous in the extreme to avoid all discussion of an issue with those who you know disagree with you.

If an issue is important enough to a person that he is willing to advise others on it (like the marriage issue), or is causing them to change their view of worship or the church (like the instrumental music issue, institutionalism, and women's roles in the church), or causing serious life-style changes (like modesty questions or drinking issues), then upon what basis does that person refuse to discuss (or debate, if necessary) the issue with one who is at least as knowledgeable as he? What is he afraid of?

I can respect anyone who is willing to put his belief to the test. But I have a very difficult time respecting those who claim to "believe" but who then stand aloof and will not subject that cherished conviction to the scrutiny of others. It betrays an attitude either of doubt about the belief or of unconcern about others.

If we cannot discuss biblical issues as adults and Christians and come to a clearer understanding of the principles that God intends for us to learn, then isn't our confession a ruse? Let's always be willing to subject our precious opinions and doctrines to the most severe scrutiny possible so that, before we say "I believe" something, we are confident that we have fully "tested the spirits to see whether they are from God." ~

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Depression: Cause and Cure



"Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression; but a good word makes it glad" (Prov. 12:25).

According to one recent source, about one in five American adults — that's over 46 million people — suffer some form of chronic depression, ranging from prolonged sadness to psychosis. Some of these unhappy people are undoubtedly victims of biological imbalances that require medical treatment.

However, in many cases the root problem must be sought in the hearts of the victims. Their depression is simply a state of mind they bring upon themselves by how they choose to think. This proverb points to anxiety as the chief culprit in creating mental gloominess. The

Hebrew word means "fear, dread, anxious care." When a person allows his mind to be consumed with worry over his problems — or potential problems — he is sure to

become depressed.

Jesus viewed this kind of mental sickness as a behavioral problem that we can control. He warns us,

"Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. . . . Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things" (Matt. 6:25, 34).

Jesus knew that if people would simply change how they think about their possessions and their future, they would be happier. Of course, that's easier said than done.

How do you obey the command, "do not worry" when it seems that

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everything in your life is going wrong?

Solomon addresses this in the second half of the proverb: "A good word makes it glad." We drive anxiety out of our hearts by forcing good words in. Consider some examples:

Bible study provides the best source of good words. Time spent reading and meditating on God's word can be a tremendous antidote to depressive thinking. Study the wonderful promises God has made to His people. Read the stories of godly men and women who overcame greater problems

than ours through their faith in God. A primary purpose of the Bible is to help people cope successfully with life, but that benefit is wasted if we do not study it.

Cheerful companions provide good words. Cultivate a close friendship with mature Christians who have learned how to be happy regardless of their circumstances. Take advantage of opportunities to share their company and conversation. Their words of encouragement will inspire you, of course. But more importantly, their optimistic spirit will rub off on you, and you will learn how to control your thinking to maintain a

positive outlook on life.

Prayer generates good words. Verbalize your feelings to God. Let Him know about your needs and fears. The simple trust expressed in such an exercise will warm your soul and lighten your load.

God did not create man to be miserable. If we are, we must deal with the cause within ourselves.

"Be anxious for nothing, . . . and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7). ~ David King

Stuff About Things

Discussing some moral problem in a certain church, editor Reuel Lemmons writes, "Since the encounter the eldership, while agreeing to the inadvisability of fellow elder's action, are urging that the thing be swept under the rug. It isn't the error of the brother's position at all that seems to count; it is the stink that has arisen over it!" (FF [Firm Foundation]: 6-16-64)

This "keep it quiet -- don't rock the boat" attitude is responsible for much condoning of sin. Further, it is responsible for -- or the result of-- a "mediocrity" which steadily lowers Christian standards to the "level"(?) of human acceptance. It destroys genuine whole-hearted submission to the divine will, making it contingent upon the winds of human favor.

Repeatedly some brother will

acknowledge that error is taught and/or practiced in his home congregation, but he refuses to seek correction because, "It would be wrong to cause trouble." What kind of reasoning is this? The trouble is already there!!

It is possible that in seeking to correct error tempers will flare and things will be said and done that are wrong. Such sins of the flesh are soul-damning, and we must "repent or perish."

But the acceptance and condoning of things we know to be contrary to God's will is PRESUMPTUOUS SIN -- willful, premeditated rebellion, upon which God has pronounced certain condemnation. (Num. 15:30-f. Jas.2:10-f.)

Nor am I blood-thirsty. I appreciate and share the desire for tranquility; and realize that peace is

sometimes shattered by public airings of irresponsible opinions. But it is spiritual suicide to tolerate error because we fear the struggle necessary to remove it.

When Premillennialism threatened to sweep the church some counseled: "Don't make a fuss about it; what will our religious neighbors think?" Some characterized brother Foy Wallace's battle with the theorists as, "hanging out our dirty linen for all to see." This is worldly pride--thinking more of the praises of men than of God. Thank God, brother Wallace did not hesitate to fight error among his brethren .

What wind chills our blood, that we now -- GO TO HELL, QUIETLY!?! ~

Plain Talk, Volume 1, Number 7, July 1964

Testing the Spirits

By David Posey

Why would a person who was once a faithful Christian suddenly begin to embrace false doctrine? Why would he risk his eternal well-being on some teaching that is far from what he had been taught in the past without subjecting his new-found belief to careful scrutiny? Why do some people cling so tenaciously to certain teaching, while rejecting, out of hand, good arguments against the view?

Most of us have known brethren who sat under the same teaching we did, and who still attend a church of Christ, but have radically changed their views on a

variety of subjects. For example, I know men who now embrace instrumental music, institutionalism, the building and maintenance of "fellowship halls" and social programs as part of the work of the church. Some have gone even further and are teaching that only the gospels count, that the letters of the apostles are not authoritative (one preacher, in a letter to me, called apostolic authority a "raggedly old tradition"). Not one of them has contacted me to try to change my view of these matters.

Exactly what leads men to make these kinds of radical changes will always escape us because we cannot read their hearts; we are limited to judging their fruits



our minds on a portion of the doctrine of Christ. There are some non-negotiables, to be sure, but why would we be afraid to re-study any subject? Truth has nothing to fear.

But even worse (if possible), is the embracing of teaching simply because it validates a chosen lifestyle or moral decision. For example, a person may want to drink "socially" (social schmocial: "social drinking" is a stupid name for it; it's drinking alcoholic beverages, period), and therefore he's "decided" that the apostle Paul's instructions to Timothy to "take a little wine for the stomach's sake" applies to him. I find

(Mat. 7:16). No doubt, some people embrace teaching for no better reason than that someone they like taught it to them. Some teaching is tenaciously held only because brother so and so taught it, "and that's good enough for me." We all need to check our doctrine against our motives and make certain we have better reasons than that for our faith. "Faith comes from hearing (the word of God)," not the word of bro. whomever. Steadfastness is no virtue when it is just parroting someone else's teaching.

We are to be steadfast and immovable but not stubborn and obstinate, though the difference may not be always apparent. We should never totally shut down

it sadly comical that some people could barely tell you what the work of the church is, but can quote verbatim 1 Tim. 5:23! Rarely has such a person done much study on the passage, but they like the sound of it and feel "confirmed" in their life-style choice. Is that honest?

There are many, though, who honestly and sincerely believe that the Bible teaches a doctrine just the way they see it. They may sincerely believe that one is saved by faith alone, or that having musical instruments in the assembly is scriptural, or that women should be able to preach, or that drinking wine is fine, or that a guilty party in a divorce can remarry, and so on . . .