

# THE SOWER

The Sower is the bimonthly magazine of Spirit & Truth Fellowship International®

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## WISDOM FOR LIFE

# WISDOM IS SUPREME

THEREFORE GET WISDOM, THOUGH IT COST ALL YOU HAVE

GET UNDERSTANDING.

BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO FINDS WISDOM

THE MAN WHO GAINS UNDERSTANDING IS MORE PROFITABLE THAN SILVER AND YIELDS BETTER RETURNS THAN MORE PRECIOUS THAN RUBIES; NOTHING YOU DESIRE CAN COMPARE FOR THE LORD GIVES WISDOM, AND MOUTH COME KNOWLEDGE AND UN



HOLY BIBLE

WISDOM CALLS ALOUD IN THE STREET, SHE RAISES HER VOICE IN THE PUBLIC SQUARES; THE FEAR OF THE LORD TEACHES A MAN WISDOM, AND HUMILITY COMES BEFORE HONOR.

HOW MUCH BETTER TO GET WISDOM THAN GOLD, TO CHOOSE UNDERSTANDING RATHER THAN SILVER! BY WISDOM A HOUSE IS BUILT, AND THROUGH UNDERSTANDING IT IS ESTABLISHED

BUY THE TRUTH AND DO NOT SELL IT; GET WISDOM AND DISCIPLINE AND UNDERSTANDING



**New Seminar!**

See page 16 for details!

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# Opening Letter

The theme of this issue of *The Sower* is “wisdom.” God values wisdom very highly, so highly, in fact, that it was the first of His creation (Prov. 8:22), so we should also highly value it. In our culture, however, most people do not value wisdom. This is clearly reflected in the compliments we hear people give each other. It is common to hear someone called, “cool,” “awesome,” or “the best,” but when was the last time you heard someone call another person “wise”?

Sadly, if the world does value wisdom, it is usually the kind that the book of James refers to as “...earthly, unspiritual, of the devil” (James 3:15). Genesis refers to this kind of “wisdom” as being “crafty.” We see it when someone stretches or breaks the boundary of the law or ethics and gets away with it. Popular movies such as *Ocean’s Eleven* (or *Twelve*; or *Thirteen*), *The Thomas Crown Affair*, or *Fast and Furious*, glorify people whose behavior is unethical.

Unethical behavior has become so commonplace in our culture that many people have become desensitized to it and do not even consider it sinful. How many popular movies contain sex outside of marriage, nudity, or obscenity? Of course there are those people who will say, “Now you are being prudish.” But am I? Since when is obeying God “prudish”? The Bible refers to it as “holy,” and “obedient.”

The Bible says that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. That makes perfect sense when we think in terms of our entire life. There will come a day when each of us will stand before the Throne of Judgment, and what we receive will be in accordance with our character and actions in this life. Therefore it is very wise to obey our Creator. The coming Judgment is not the only reason to be wise, however. Debt, anxiety, and sickness afflict millions of people. Sadly, much of it is a direct result of ignoring God’s wise advice. What is worse is that even though people do not want to be afflicted, they look at God’s way out as oppressive, rather than liberating, and shun it.

Christians must be assertive and aggressive to gain, and maintain, wisdom. We must even go beyond gaining wisdom for ourselves, and be “the salt of the earth,” propounding and promoting wisdom when and where we can. If we do not value wisdom and wise choices and are complacent about the evil that is growing around us, then by default we are fools, “...and the complacency of fools will destroy them” (Prov. 1:32). In contrast, if we are wise, we are blessed. Let’s make up our minds to be blessed and to be a blessing, and strive to gain, and live by, God’s wise advice.

One wise choice at a time,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Schoenheit". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "One wise choice at a time,".

# Walking in Wisdom

by Dan Gallagher

The comparison is often made that a person's traveling through life is like taking a journey. I have found that comparison to be very helpful in a number of ways. In the same way that life can be filled with ups and downs, so, too, a traveler can be confronted with hills and valleys. Also, as we journey, there will be times of refreshing and times of drought. Recently I reflected on the aspect of the road itself. While taking a road trip I realized that no matter what road we take, we all eventually come to a crossing, something that presents us with a moment of opportunity and decision.

Life, like my road trip, is also filled with many crossroads. Most of the decisions we make in life are minor, having little serious or lasting impact. However, there are times, just like some crossroads, when the choices we make will have serious outcomes. These life-changing crossroads are critical points of decision because they can impact us for the rest of our lives. Points of decision like the type of career we choose, the place we choose to live, or the person we marry, are critical.

There are many ways in which our journey through life is similar to taking a walk. Often we have time to plan and prepare, but there are other times when we need to make a quick decision and act. One of the worst feelings we have is when we reach a crossroad in life and do not know which way to go. It is at these critical points of decision that many of us wish the Lord would simply tell us what he would like us to do. It certainly would simplify things if he would just show us the best path to take. When we do not know what to do, we often end up stuck in the middle of the intersection, which is not a good place to stay.

I know I am not alone in having feelings of frustration when I am "stuck." I often see others who are also immobilized with indecision, stuck in uncertainty. Far too often it is because we do not want to make a mistake, but then there are also those times when we legitimately do not know what to do. At times like this I have prayed, "I'll do anything you want me to Lord, just show me what you want me to do." Certainly direction from the Lord would be the quickest and easiest answer to my situation. Unfortunately, the lack of a reply is even more unsettling.

I have often wondered, "Why don't we hear more often from the Lord at times like this?" Clearly, we know he loves us, and there is no good thing that he, or the Father, would ever withhold from us. I know the Lord directs his people, and I am certain about many instances when he has guided me, but there are many times when I am standing at the crossroads and I get no sense of him showing me what to do.

That is when it occurred to me, "Maybe he doesn't answer me because he really doesn't want to tell me what to do." There are a couple of reasons that the Lord might not answer me. One is that I have enough information to make the right decision on my own if I just use wisdom. Another is that there is no "right answer," because the Lord will work with me in whatever choice I make.

The other day I was helping my three-year-old grandson, Seth, learn the task of getting dressed. As I helped Seth, I observed that I needed to instruct and help him, but not to the point of making him too dependent upon me. After all, the more I do for him, it seems the less he wants to do on his own. This tendency seems to run pretty deep for most people. I also noted that when Seth does what I tell him to do, I am pleased because of his obedience, but I am even more thrilled when I see him do the right thing after he has reasoned it out for himself. That's when it hit me: Is the way God is working with me similar to the way I am working with my grandson?

## **God is not a Micromanager**

God has no desire to control every minute detail of our lives. I resist being micromanaged, and resent it when someone is controlling or dictating my every move. As parents, it is our job to help our children develop individuality and independence. Micromanaging, controlling, or directing a person's every move does nothing to foster the development of self-confidence and self-government. Although it is hard to do, ignoring a child's request for help is necessary when we know he has the ability to figure out the solution for himself, so why would we expect anything different or less from God?

When faced with the decisions of life, God has already provided us an answer that requires us to grow and stretch our abilities. He tells us that the answer is wisdom, and that is why He says, "Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom..." (Prov. 4:7). When we do not know which path to take, He says by wisdom we "...will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path" (Prov. 2:9). God really has no need to tell us what to do most of the time. We just need to learn to walk in wisdom.

When we apply ourselves to godly wisdom, we grow in our ability to discern, which is the ability to perceive clearly. Wisdom provides discernment, and discernment allows us to separate matters, first in separating right from wrong, and then even eventually in cutting between better and best. The Apostle Paul prayed that the Philippian church would increase in knowledge so that they could discern what was best in order to be pure and blameless (Phil. 1:9 and 10). It is God's will that we are wise to discern things for ourselves. A mature person is someone who can think for himself, has the ability to determine what is the right way to go, and if he cannot figure it out, he knows who to turn to for advice.

## **Wisdom & Prayer**

We should always seek to do the will of God, so when we are faced with the major decisions of life, we should seek His direction through prayer. But we should also strive to use wisdom, knowing that His answer to our situation may be found through both. We cannot forget that applying ourselves to wisdom is doing the "will of God." Many times we have the "seeking His direction" part right, but we forget the "applying wisdom" part. God tells us that we are to seek wisdom even if it costs us all we have (Prov. 4:7). Wisdom is more profitable than silver, yields better returns than gold, and is even more precious than rubies, and nothing we desire can ever compare to it (Prov. 3:14 and 15).

Wisdom may show us which way to proceed, but that is only part of the solution to the problem we face at a crossroad. Walking in wisdom involves not only knowing what to do but, more importantly, doing it. Wisdom shows us what to do, but our character is what enables us to do it. It is good to promote discernment and wisdom, but discerning what to do is meaningless if we do not have the proper character to do it.

## **Character Counts**

God has demonstrated through numerous examples in His Word that He is more concerned with our character than He is with our gifts and callings. For example, God gave King Solomon wisdom greater than any man who ever lived before or after him (1 Kings 3:12, 4:29-34). Yet it was Solomon's character flaws that resulted in his doing evil. "...Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done" (1 Kings 11:6). The record in Deuteronomy 17 expressly forbade the kings of Israel from doing a number of things, such as returning to Egypt, taking many wives, accumulating large amounts of silver and gold, or maintaining great numbers of horses. The kings were also directed not to think of themselves as being better than their brothers, or to turn from the Law. 1 Kings 10 and 11 records that Solomon did exactly the opposite of what God had directed. How unfortunate it is that Solomon, the wisest man to ever live, failed because of his poor character. Wisdom may show us what to do, but character is what enables us to do it.

God's gift to Solomon at the time of his inauguration as king was wisdom. Then God appeared to him a second time when he was about forty years old saying, "...if you walk before me in integrity of heart and

uprightness...” (1 Kings 9:4). God saw the dangerous trajectory of Solomon’s character flaws and warned him to walk with integrity. Of all the godly character traits a person must have, there is none more important to God than integrity. Integrity is the quality of being the same on the inside and outside. When we walk with integrity we are people of truth, through and through.

Twice God says of Solomon’s father, David, that he was a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam. 13:14 and Acts 13:22). One reason he was a man after God’s own heart was that he was a man of strong godly character. David’s prayer to God was, “Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place” (Ps. 51:6). Unlike his son Solomon, David was a man of great character, and one of his great character traits was his integrity. This is why God’s Word says, “He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them” (Ps. 78:70-72).

### **Lessons about Wisdom & Character**

Lessons about wisdom and character abound in the Word of God. King Saul failed because of his character flaws. He feared the people and was more concerned about his reputation with men than his standing before God. In contrast, the patriarch Joseph had enough character that he fled from his master Potiphar’s wife when she tried to seduce him. When she appealed to him, he refused her, saying, “...my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:8 and 9). Now that’s a man with great character and integrity.

When we are people of integrity we are concerned about the things God is concerned about, and we will do the things He wants us to do. Unlike people, who look on the outward appearance, God looks on the inside at a person’s heart. Often we are attracted to a person who is a skillful presenter, or walking strongly in a spiritual calling. It is good for all of us to seek to know and walk in our gifts, but we must never make the mistake of putting gifts and callings ahead of character. God looks on the heart because that is where character dwells. That is why He says in Proverbs 4:23, “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” Our hearts, like a wellspring, are the source from which things flow. After speaking about our hearts, God addresses character matters, saying, “Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil” (Prov. 4:24-27). These are all commands addressing our character.

We will be faced with many crossroads as we continue on the pathway of life. Some junctions will be critical points that will determine, to a great degree, the course of our lives. We must always seek God’s will, and trust to follow His lead. Thankfully God has provided us direction and shown us that we should pursue wisdom. In doing so we will be able to know what is the right and good path to follow. God will never leave us without an answer, and once we have discerned it we must have the character to follow through and do it. My good friend Mike Patten introduced me to a phrase that a pastor he knew often used. He said that spiritual maturity amounts many times to “just doing the next right thing.” Walking in wisdom involves discerning the right thing to do, and then having the strength of character to do it.

**Read online at  
TruthOrTradition.com/wisdomtopic**

# The Vine

## Deciding to do!

by Mike L. Patten

For the last several months it has been my privilege to work as the Network of Fellowships Coordinator for this ministry. During this time, one of my main tasks has been to work with Dan Gallagher as we examined how Spirit & Truth Fellowship relates to local fellowships.

It has been so very exciting for me to watch the shift back to the original intent of a network that exists to serve individuals as well as independent fellowships around the world. The focus is no longer upon building a **community** of fellowships that belong to Spirit & Truth Fellowship International, but rather upon building **connections** between individuals and fellowships.

It has been a joy to communicate with a growing number of individuals who are looking for fellowship in their areas. Many times we have successfully directed these inquiries to existing fellowship groups in the various locations throughout the United States. Unfortunately, there were also many times in which there were no known fellowship groups in a given area that we could refer others to. This is the difficult part of my job. My heart goes out to individuals who are yearning to connect with the household of God. I empathize deeply with those who are isolated and long for fellowship. I was among their numbers at one time and know the despair that can accompany this kind of loneliness.

However, there is hope because none of us is ever alone. The words God our Father spoke to Moses are as true today for each of us as they were then.

### **Deuteronomy 31:8**

The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

While fellowship with God and the Lord Jesus is always available to us, more is needed for a healthy life. Isolation is never the will of our heavenly Father. God designed mankind to be a relational people, and from the very beginning He addressed isolation as a problem.

### **Genesis 2:18**

The LORD God said, “It is **not good** for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

One of the main tactics used by our Enemy to impede God’s people is isolation. Too often our modern conveniences serve to isolate us from one another: drive thru this-and-that stores, self serve gas stations, automated teller machines and the list goes on. The basic structure of our life is understood in the framework of family, both physical and spiritual. When we isolate ourselves in either area we suffer.

Many times individuals withdraw from relationships due to fear or offense. Fear can keep us from connecting for a variety of reasons; however none justify the damage we endure when we remain isolated. I have observed that often followers of Jesus are afraid to associate with new Christian groups due to fear of the unknown. Offenses that are not resolved tend to lead to isolation as well. In both of these cases the remedy stands ready to deliver.

Faith is the ticket out of isolation when fear is the problem, and forgiveness is the answer when it is a matter of an offense. Regardless of the circumstance, when one turns to God and others, new opportunities become present.

In God's Word, we find an important key to overcoming the inertia associated with being isolated.

**Philippians 2:13 REV<sup>1</sup>**

for it is God who is working in you both to want *to do*, and to do, his good pleasure.

Our decision to act is what lies between our desire **to do and our actual doing**. My wife Mary recently told me about an experience she had that helped me see this more clearly. She said:

“I knew I needed to prepare for an upcoming fellowship meeting at which I would be in charge of leading the worship as well as the overall meeting. I waited for days to get some inspiration from the Lord, but nothing came to me until I decided to do something about it.

I had a morning alone, so while I was packing up the Christmas decorations, I got out my file of worship albums, and started listening to music I hadn't heard in some time. As I listened, some of the songs really “spoke” to my heart, and before long, I realized that the Lord had given me the inspiration I needed for the theme, and several songs I could use. As I thought more on this and played the songs over several times, the picture of what I needed to do became clear.

I realized later that just waiting for the Lord to plop into my head what I needed to do was not the right way to go about it. I got what I needed after I made a **decision** and spent time listening to the music I could use.”

Yes, **decision** is the key between desire and **doing** what is needed to overcome the inertia present with isolation. It is my belief that there is a growing desire among many in our land to come home to the Lord and dwell in his household.

If you are isolated from fellowship with other followers of Jesus Christ I implore you to consider making a change. Do whatever it takes to get connected. One of the great blessings in this country is that there are churches everywhere who call on the name of Jesus Christ. If you are committed to being in relationship with followers of Jesus who are monotheists, contact us ([fellowship@stfonline.org](mailto:fellowship@stfonline.org)) or consider starting your own group.

**Building an Enduring Work of Truth** is the vision statement of Spirit & Truth Fellowship. It is our intention in this disciple making endeavor to help many people around the world live lives of *Truth, Integrity, Courage, and Liberty*. To that end, we would be honored to help you in any way we can. Please feel free to contact me directly at: [mikepatten23@yahoo.com](mailto:mikepatten23@yahoo.com).

**Note:**

1. Revised English Version (REV): The Revised English Version is the ongoing Bible translation project that Spirit & Truth Fellowship International has been working on for the past eight years. The nature of language is such that every translation of the Bible reflects the theology of the translators. That is true of the REV as well, which reflects our understanding of the meaning of Greek words and phrases. We assert that the meaning of the Greek is most accurately translated in a way that reflects a Biblical Unitarian (monotheistic) viewpoint, as well as one that is dispensational, charismatic, and recognizes the free will of the individual.

# Salvation

## The Choice is Yours

### Wisdom for Eternity

If someone asked you whether you would rather have one dollar, or one thousand, which would you choose? Most people would choose to have one thousand. If someone asked you if you wished to have one true friend, or many true friends, which would you choose? Most people would choose to have many true friends. And if someone offered you a finite or an infinite life, which would you choose? Most people would choose eternity.

Though obtaining everlasting life may seem difficult to some, it is in fact quite the opposite. In Romans 10, God offers a clear, concise path to gaining everlasting life... but it is a choice:

#### **Romans 10:9**

That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

The choice is to believe in His son and in the power of the Creator who raised Christ from the dead. What greater **wisdom** can be found than to confess Jesus as your Lord and to believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead... and to be saved for eternity? By the discerning of wisdom, one can attain true salvation.

What would *you* choose?

# The Contender

## A Man Reaps What He Sows

by John W. Schoenheit

How many Christians have prayed and prayed about something and felt like they never got an answer from God? No doubt there have been millions. There are many reasons that people do not get answers to prayer. One of them that is not discussed much is that God expects us to obey Him and use wisdom in our daily lives. God is certainly loving, kind, and “rich in mercy,” but on the other hand, He is not a dispenser of “cheap grace,” always responsible to rescue us from the problems we cause for ourselves.

God’s Word tells us that God is not mocked, and what a person sows, he will reap.

### **Galatians 6:7**

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

We will now embark on a study of some of the basics in God’s Word as to how each of us can “reap” a life that is more satisfying, fulfilled, powerful, and peaceful. Much of this study will come out of the book of Proverbs. God tells us the purpose of Proverbs in the opening chapter. It helps us attain wisdom, insight, and discipline, whether we are young and inexperienced, or older and more experienced. The information in Proverbs helps us do what is right and fair in the eyes of God. It gives us guidance in life (Prov. 1:2-6).

To appreciate the proverbs in the book of Proverbs, it is helpful to know that the Hebrew word translated “Proverbs” is *mashal*, and it means “proverb,” “proverbial saying,” or “sentences of ethical wisdom.”<sup>1</sup> The Greeks translated it into *paroimia* in the Septuagint, and it was brought into the Latin Vulgate as *proverbia*, which is why our English Bibles have “Proverbs.” The real key to understanding Proverbs, however, is given in *The Companion Bible* by E. W. Bullinger. He points out that the Hebrew root *mashal* means “to rule,” (see Gen. 1:18, 24:2; Exod. 21:8, etc.), and points out that proverbs are words given by God for ruling our lives.

### **God’s Wisdom**

The book of Proverbs does not consist of man’s wisdom that just happened to be recorded by Solomon and other wise men and then passed down as helpful sayings. Like the rest of the Bible, the proverbs in Proverbs are the God-breathed Word (2 Tim. 3:16). While it is likely true that some of them were spoken by wise people and then passed on in the culture (such as our English, “A penny saved is a penny earned”), God gave many of them directly to Solomon. In any case, as recorded in Scripture they are God’s words and God’s wisdom, lovingly given to man to rule his life. God’s proverbs are generally different from His commands. To break a command is sin, while to ignore a proverb is stupidity. It only ends in disappointment, disgrace, and destruction.

It is unfortunate that some Christians today act as if they can “sow” foolishness by ignoring or disobeying God’s rules for living life, and still think they can “reap” an abundant life. Of course they would never say that, but they act that way, because they ignore God’s rules but expect Him to rescue them from problems. Sadly, much of this foolishness comes from teaching about “faith” from an unbalanced perspective. Turn on Christian radio or television and you will hear sermon after sermon on faith, and how faith will solve people’s problems. It is taught that people will get money by faith, get healed by faith, or get what they want in life by faith. And while some people do, many do not. Of course, when someone is not rescued “by faith,” it is easy to point a finger and say, “He did not have enough faith,” but is that really true? While it is certainly true in some cases, is lack of faith the only reason so many people have problems and unanswered prayers? Could there be other factors we should also consider? Biblically, there is no reason to limit faith as the only factor involved. Scripture presents several other factors that play into why prayers sometimes go unanswered; for example, the

factors of human and angelic free will, the spiritual battle, the Fall, sin, and God's will. And as we will see, it seems clear that our ignoring wisdom is also one of the reasons people have unanswered prayers.

### **True Faith**

In order to understand why a lack of "faith" is not always the answer to people's not getting what they pray for, we must understand "faith." We of Spirit & Truth Fellowship International have a lot of articles about faith (visit [TruthOrTradition.com/faith](http://TruthOrTradition.com/faith)), and for that reason we will limit our discussion in this article. "Faith" is "trust." Hebrews chapter 11 has many examples of people who had great faith, great trust in God. What is absolutely vital to understand about faith, however, is that there must be something to have "faith" in. We can have faith that we will be saved through Jesus because God promised we could be. We can have faith that we will get new bodies at the Rapture because God promised we would. Noah built an ark "by faith" because God made promises about the coming flood and the ark, and Noah trusted what God said (Heb. 11:7; Gen. 6:13-17). Joseph could have faith about the Exodus from Egypt even though he never lived to see it, because he trusted God's promise that Israel would leave Egypt (Heb. 11:22; Gen. 15:13 and 14).

### **Rich in Mercy**

In contrast to having faith in something God has promised, it is impossible to have "faith" that the moon is made of cheese, the sun is actually cool to the touch, or the Devil will be saved. Why? Because God never made promises about those things, so there is nothing to have "faith" in; there is nothing to trust in. When it comes to God's Word, if God says we will reap what we sow, can we have faith that His Word is not true? No, we cannot. Yet God does miracles of healing and gives divine help to many people who have sowed into fleshly pleasures and have reaped problems and disease. Why is that? The answer is that God is "rich in mercy" (Eph. 2:4) and His grace can overflow to us (2 Cor. 9:8). "Mercy" is God's withholding a judgment or punishment that we deserve, and "grace" is special favor we do not deserve. We rejoice that God gives mercy and grace, but as we see in the world around us, not everyone who asks for God's grace and mercy receives it in the form of a miracle. Many people's problems continue on.

God's mercy and grace have limits, and are meant for special situations. For example, the general truth in God's Word is that lazy people are poor while hardworking people have what they need: "Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth" (Prov. 10:4). Can a person who has been lazy repent, ask God for abundance, and receive it? Yes, it can happen, but that is not the general pattern of life we see in the world around us, or else God would not be true to His own Word. Interestingly, the only reference to God's mercy in Proverbs is that if we sin, we can confess our sin and receive mercy (Prov. 28:13). This makes sense because receiving forgiveness for sin, as an act of God's mercy, is a principle of the Word that we find from Genesis through Revelation. It should not be lost on us, however, that if ignoring God's wise advice and then trying to force God's mercy "by faith" was a standard way to succeed with God, then we should see God's mercy mentioned many times in Proverbs, not just once. The situation is similar with grace. The only time God's grace is mentioned in Proverbs is that God gives grace to those who are humble (Prov. 3:34).

### **Example in Scripture**

We do not understand all the reasons some people seem to get special grace and mercy while others do not.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, that is what happens, even in Hebrews 11, the chapter on faith. For example, Hebrews 11 refers to Daniel, who was divinely protected in the lion's den (Dan. 6:16-22), and to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who God saved alive inside Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace (Heb. 11:34; Dan. 3). But Hebrews 11 also refers to people who were mocked, imprisoned, tortured, whipped, and killed. Yet both those who were divinely rescued and those who were not were "commended for their faith" (Heb. 11:32-39).<sup>3</sup>

It is common to hear television evangelists say that if a person has faith, God will bring him material abundance. Does that fit with the Word? James contradicts that "prosperity" teaching.

### **James 2:5 (ESV)<sup>4</sup>**

Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?

The reason television evangelists can stay in business is that many poor people who listen to a “faith” teaching begin to pray diligently and take action to get abundance, and God works to answer their prayer. However, many other people never seem to have their prayer for financial assistance answered. That does not necessarily mean they lack faith. As James says, many poor people are rich in faith.

### **Consider the Ant**

Some poor people are poor because they have foolishly ignored God’s “rules for life” in Proverbs and elsewhere. We cannot sow foolishness and expect to reap abundance, even if we have faith. God will not ignore His Word, even if we do. For example, a person who never sows any money toward his retirement ignores God’s wise proverb to store up in the good times when he can work, so he will have what he needs in the bad times, when he cannot.

### **Proverbs 6:6-11**

(6) Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!

(7) It has no commander, no overseer or ruler,

(8) yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.

(9) How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?

(10) A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—

(11) and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.

God says to learn from the ant, which stores up food in the summer, i.e., when food is available to gather. Furthermore, God points out that if we are lazy and do not work hard, then poverty will come upon us “like a bandit,” meaning it will come quickly and overpower us. Do we see that in life? Certainly. Many people who could save money never do. They spend everything they make and live beyond their means year after year. Furthermore, where they could save money by doing things themselves, they hire others to mow their yards, clean their windows, wash their cars, etc. That is well and good if their financial plans allow for it, but too many people do not have enough money because they make foolish decisions.

Sadly, many people who foolishly ignored God’s advice year after year then listen to a “faith preacher” say that God will give them financial abundance if they will just have faith. So they pray and “try to have faith,” but what are they going to have faith in? That God will give them money even though they ignored His advice? That does not make any sense. By God’s mercy and grace, God does get money to many people who have ignored Him, and that gives us hope and is a reason to pray diligently for God’s help, but we cannot ignore the fact that some people who have lived foolishly pray for help and do not seem to get their prayers answered. Thankfully, the Christian world is waking up to the need for wisdom in our finances, and now there are a number of Christian teachers who specialize in teaching on financial wisdom.

Teaching that “faith” is the answer to all our problems only leads to doubt and confusion. After all, when a Christian loves God and prays without seeing significant results, it can be confusing, and even emotionally devastating. We end up doubting God and ourselves. If we are ever going to have the truth of the Word, be set free in our hearts and minds about this life, and be in the place where we do not blame God for what happens to us, the whole Word must fit together. “Lack of faith” is not the only reason that Christians have significant problems in life. Proverbs are God’s rules for living life, and yet “faith” is never mentioned, not even once. In contrast, “wisdom” occurs more than 50 times, and “wise” more than 60 times.<sup>5</sup> God is telling us in a very strong way that wisdom is one of the dominant reasons people succeed in life, and foolishness is one of the main reasons people have trouble. He is also making it clear that “faith” is not always a way out of the problems we cause ourselves.

## Today's Culture

It is not popular in today's culture to speak about living wisely. We live in a society that is demanding and impatient. We want what we want, and we want it "right now." Most people are very undisciplined in the way they live. Their spending habits, eating habits, sexual behavior, use of time, and much more, show a profound lack of wisdom. In contrast, God tells us to be disciplined in our lives ("...get wisdom, discipline and understanding," Prov. 23:23). Furthermore, He tells us that "...fools despise wisdom and discipline" (Prov. 1:7), and "He who ignores discipline despises himself..." and "...comes to poverty and shame..." (Prov. 15:32, 13:18). Also, He says, "The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him...He will die for lack of discipline..." (Prov. 5:22 and 23).

God tells us to have discipline and self-control, and not living a disciplined life is a major reason why God does not deliver some people from their problems by "faith." We cannot ignore God's advice for ruling our lives and then expect Him to deliver us because this goes against His spiritual laws of sowing and reaping and His principles of stewardship. This may sound hard and harsh to our modern ears, because many people today think God should help us if we ask Him, no matter how we behave. However, God never changes, and He certainly does not change His immutable nature to accommodate our soft and undisciplined society.

If a person has health problems because he is completely undisciplined in his eating habits, never exercises, and is very overweight, will God miraculously take weight off him or help his health problem by "faith"? Thankfully, sometimes, in His great grace, He does. However, often He does not. Let us be clear about this: God is not responsible to get us out of a problem we have brought upon ourselves because we ignored or disobeyed Him. We seem to understand this when it comes to many "ordinary" problems of life. If we do not use wisdom and plan ahead for time to clean our house and do our laundry, God will not do it for us by faith. If we do not put gas in our car, we do not expect to be able to pray and have God fill our tank for us. If we do not go to the grocery store before guests arrive at our house, we do not expect God will put food in our refrigerator for them by faith.

In spite of the fact that most of us understand the clear examples above, we sometimes get confused if the situation is more complex. For example, someone may ignore wisdom and make the foolish choice to drive over the speed limit in unsafe road conditions, eventually wrecking his car and ending up in the hospital. If people from the church come over and pray with him but he is not healed, both he and they may think he was not healed because he lacked faith. However, it is just as likely that he was not healed because he had ignored God's advice: "A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it" (Prov. 22:3). If we suffer because we ignored the Word and were not prudent, is it God's responsibility to heal us anyway? Furthermore, if He did, what would be the point of His wise advice? Was it just a "suggestion" we can freely ignore if we have faith, while people with less faith must be obedient? That cannot be the truth.

## Blaming God

God is easy to blame when we do not get what we feel He should give us. But God tells us that if we ignore wisdom, when calamity comes upon us, we will not always be divinely rescued from the trouble. Should God ignore His own Word to fix the problems we cause ourselves? By the figure of speech Personification, God brings Wisdom to life and has her speak to us:

### **Proverbs 1:20-31 (abbreviated)**

Wisdom calls aloud in the street, "How long will you simple ones love your simple ways...and fools hate knowledge? If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you...But since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you— when...distress and trouble overwhelm you. Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me. Since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways..."

These words are God's Word. They seem harsh when we read them, but they fit with what we so often see in the world around us. For example, many Christians who ignored God's advice about sexual purity have sexually transmitted diseases and have not been healed "by faith." There are Christians in jail because they ignored God's advice about hanging out with evil people, and God does not get them out "by faith" (Prov. 1:10-19). Many Christians ignore God's wise advice that a gossip will betray a confidence (Prov. 11:13), and foolishly tell a secret to someone they know has loose lips. Will God restore their reputation "by faith" when the gossip spreads the news all over town? Usually not. We need to look around us and see all the Christians who have problems that they have caused themselves by lack of wisdom. God is speaking loudly! Could it be that all these Christians simply lack the faith to get God to deliver them? We know that is not the case. Remember what Wisdom told us? We will eat the fruit of our ways if we ignore God's advice (Prov. 1:31).

### **No Verse Stands on its Own**

This brings us to another point we must be aware of if we are to understand God, the Bible, and life, and especially if we are going to live our lives without being angry at God. In our impatient, undisciplined Christian culture, some people treat the Bible as if it is a book of individual helpful sayings, with each verse standing on its own. They act as if the Bible is one of those books of unconnected wise sayings that some people have on their coffee table. **The truth is that no verse stands on its own. Every verse is interconnected with every other verse and with the general theme of the Bible.** That means to really understand life we have to pay attention to how the verses relate to each other, which means we have to study the entire Bible. But that is not what our "we want what we want and we want it now" culture wants to do.

What is typical in our culture is to take a verse such as Philippians 4:19 ("And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus"), and then try to "claim" it, and force God to give us abundance "by faith." But what about the many verses that say if we are undisciplined, or lazy, we will be poor (Prov. 10:4, 13:18, 14:23, 20:13, 21:15 and 17, 23:21, 24:33 and 34, 28:19)? These verses are God's Word too. Can we reap what we have not sown? Can we reap abundance when we have sown foolishness? As we have already seen, thankfully, sometimes God can move powerfully in grace and mercy to help, but often the Word comes to pass and we reap what we sow and eat the fruit of our ways. Sadly, many people do not see things that way, and blame themselves for not having enough faith, or blame God for not being loving.

### **Healing by Faith**

Another verse people often try to "claim" by faith is that they are healed in Christ. Yet how many sick Christians do not get divinely healed? Can it be all of them have no faith, or are there other reasons? How many people ignore God's wisdom about health? The Bible contains good advice about the foods we should eat, and it tells us to avoid extremes ("...The man who fears God will avoid all **extremes**" Eccles. 7:18). Furthermore, in the biblical culture people walked everywhere, so everyone got plenty of exercise. Also, God warns us about anxiety (Prov. 12:25; Phil. 4:6), and commands us to be peaceful (Prov. 14:30; Phil. 4:7; Col. 3:15). Can we sow poor eating, exercise, and mental habits, and then reap health "by faith"? Let us recognize that God is merciful and sometimes can heal us even though we have ignored Him, but He cannot do it all the time—He cannot break His own Word (For further study on healing visit [TruthOrTradition.com/healing](http://TruthOrTradition.com/healing)).

God wants us to live lives that are truly blessed. To do that, we need to be wise, which is why God tells us, "Get wisdom, get understanding..." (Prov. 4:5). God also tells us to gain the discipline to carry out what we know to do. When we are ignoring God's advice we are being proud and selfish, but when we are doing all we can to obey God, then we are being humble before Him. The proud cannot expect God's special help, but the humble can: "...God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5; Prov. 3:34). This is, by the way, why so many people who have problems caused by their foolishness do get divine help— if they humbly come before God and repent of their foolishness, He can give grace.

God wants us to be blessed in every way. That means we will have to obey His rules about wisdom and discipline as much as His rules about faith. That is not easy to do in our culture. In fact, it requires some

discipline to get more discipline. Nevertheless, let us work hard to be obedient. It is a choice to turn on the television if we have not read the Bible that day. It is a choice to sleep late and then be in so much of a hurry we do not have time to pray. As God's children, let us redouble our efforts to be humble and wise, and avoid the pain of foolishness. Also, let us not be so foolish or spiritually blind that we blame God for the pain we have in life. God is only love, only good, and only helpful. Our pain comes from the Devil and his demonic fallen world, and from the pain we have caused ourselves. Let us obey God's direction: "Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding" (Prov. 4:7).

**Notes:**

1. *The New Brown, Driver, and Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (Francis Brown, Editor, Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc., Lafayette, IN, reprinted 1981).
2. We do know the spiritual battle between good and evil is part of the reason. For more on the spiritual battle visit [TruthOrTradition.com/battle](http://TruthOrTradition.com/battle)
3. "Faith" teachers will say that while all the people in Hebrews 11 had faith in God, only the ones rescued had faith to be rescued while the others did not. However, that is an assumption based on the theology of faith they already hold. There is no verse that supports this claim.
4. We shifted to the ESV for this verse because the NIV says, "...poor in the eyes of the world..." instead of the more literal, "poor in the world." This verse is speaking of poor people, people without much material means of support. Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*<sup>TM</sup> © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved.
5. Tally was taken from the KJV.

**Available online at  
[TruthOrTradition.com/wisdomtopic](http://TruthOrTradition.com/wisdomtopic)**

# Partner Profile

Hannah Branch

There are a few things that everybody needs. We all hunger for food and thirst for water, but what about the things our hearts require? Every human heart starves without love, and I think it is the same with truth. Some people will find any shred of what someone else says is truth and cling to it without questioning it for fear that it might not be the real truth. Others nomadically hop from one shred of the truth to another, not satisfied until they can claim more than just a shred.

I am immeasurably blessed to have grown up in a home full of love, knowing God's Word from the time I could process speech. As a family, we would read the Bible together before bed and memorize verses. Growing up this way protected me from countless teenage tragedies and instead filled my life with a vast number of blessings. It is my heart that other families could also avoid the traps of the world and be free of the damage they cause.

To be honest, my motives in becoming a Partner with Spirit & Truth Fellowship were a little selfish. I wanted to be in possession of Spirit & Truth materials for my own study purposes, and to share them with others if the need arose. So I signed up. I hope this ministry becomes a bigger part of your life than just providing you study materials, for that is what has happened with me.

After participating in the 20's Conference last fall, my life was completely rearranged in the best way possible. Gathering with other likeminded believers ignited in me a fiery passion to finally hand over the rest of my heart and life to my Father and His Son. When I got back to school (I'm a junior at New Mexico State University), my classes became a pleasant hum in the background of my God-centered life.

After that experience, there is no reason why I wouldn't want to support such a loving and truth-filled organization. Every one of us walking on this planet is starving for what this ministry works tirelessly to provide to the world. This ministry is definitely following after the example of Paul, who wrote:

## **2 Corinthians 2:17**

Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.

I can give confidently to this ministry, knowing that I'm doing far more than just increasing a profit margin. On the contrary, I'm fueling the possibility of similar life-changing results in other people's lives. This is why our support is vital if Spirit & Truth Fellowship is to continue reaching out to people with great truth. Their commitment to the Word of God and to delivering it to the world with the love it yearns for is too exceptional and too indispensable for me not to become a part of it all.

My prayer is that the truth of God would inject your life with joy in the same way it has mine, and that you would boldly share it with all the love-starved people you know. My heart reaches out to you!

Hannah Branch  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

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# Figures of Speech

## Epistrophe

by John W. Schoenheit

The ability to communicate by words is one thing that sets mankind apart from all other creatures. God is the Author of language, and no one has ever used language as precisely as God does in the Bible, including His use of figures of speech. When most people say, “a figure of speech,” they are speaking in general terms of something that is not true to fact. However, genuine “figures of speech” are legitimate grammatical and lexical forms that add emphasis and feeling to what we say and write. In the Bible, God uses figures of speech to emphasize things that He wants us to see as important. Many people read the Bible and never ask themselves, “How do we know what God wants emphasized in His Word?” God uses figures of speech to bring emphasis where He wants emphasis, and therefore recognizing and properly interpreting the figures of speech in the Bible is important. Knowing the figures of speech God uses in the Bible helps us to understand the true meaning of Scripture and enables us to more fully enjoy its richness. It is important that we become somewhat familiar with the figures of speech in Scripture, of which there are more than 200 varieties.<sup>1</sup>

The figure we are going to cover in this issue of *The Sower* is **Epistrophe** (in English, pronounced ĭ-piss'-tro-fee, and sometimes referred to as **Antistrophe**). The English dictionary correctly defines Epistrophe as the repetition of a word or words at the end of successive clauses or sentences. It is a related, but opposite figure from Anaphora, which is the repetition of a word or words at the beginning of successive clauses or sentences. Authors use Epistrophe for rhetorical or poetic effect, and God uses Epistrophe to draw the attention of the reader to something He wants emphasized.

We are familiar with Epistrophe in Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, which speaks of “...that government of **the people**, by **the people**, and for **the people**, shall not perish from the earth.” We also see Epistrophe in some of the great literature of the world. Charles Dickens opened his famous novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, with the line, “It was the best **of times**, it was the worst **of times**...” While we are perhaps most familiar with poetry that ends in rhyming words, some stanzas of poetry end with the same word or phrase, thus employing the figure of speech Epistrophe. For example, the last two lines of the first stanza of Susan Coolidge’s (1845-1905) poem *Begin Again*, end in “hope for you,” and Rudyard Kipling ended each stanza of his poem, *Mother O’ Mine*, with the words, “Mother o’ mine, O mother o’ mine.”

Below are some examples of Epistrophe from the Bible.

### **Romans 8:31**

...If God is for **us**, who can be against **us**?

The repetition of “us” at the end of the phrases catches our attention and makes this verse easy to remember. God could have stated the same basic truth without the Epistrophe by saying something such as, “If God is on our side, who can be against us,” but that obviously lacks the emphasis that God has placed in His Word.

### **Deuteronomy 32:10**

In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him;  
he guarded him as the apple of his eye,

As this is worded in the NIV, the Epistrophe is translated out of the English, and so the emphasis is lost. However, in the Hebrew, each phrase ends with *hu* (him), and given the context set in verse 9, the emphasis

shows God's special care over "Jacob," who represents both the person, Jacob, and all his people, Israel. Note verse 9 and 10 together (v. 10 is Bullinger's translation).

**Deuteronomy 32:10**

(9) For the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance.

(10) In a desert land he found **him**; And in the waste howling wilderness, about, he led **him**; He instructed **him**; As the apple of His eye He kept **him**.

**Psalm 24:10**

"Who is he, this **King of glory**? The LORD Almighty—he is the **King of glory**."

The Epistrophe emphasizes who God is.

**Psalm 118:10-12 (KJV)**

(10) All nations compassed me about: but **in the name of the LORD will I destroy them**.

(11) They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but **in the name of the LORD I will destroy them**.

(12) They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for **in the name of the LORD I will destroy them**.

The Epistrophe is God's emphasis that if we are going to win, we must do it in the name of the LORD.

**1 Corinthians 13:11 (KJV)**

When I was a **child**, I spake as a **child**, I understood as a **child**, I thought as a **child**: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

The repetition of "child" (perhaps translated even better as "baby"), draws our attention to the verse and powerfully makes the point that God wants made: we are all just "children" seeing things unclearly until Jesus comes again, at which point we will be mature.

**Revelation 22:11 (KJV)**

He that is unjust, let him be unjust **still**: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy **still**: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous **still**: and he that is holy, let him be holy **still**.

This verse, in the very last chapter of the Bible, emphasizes that even in the last times people will go on living according to their own desires, and then on Judgment Day they will get what they deserve (Rev. 22:12).

It sometimes happens that the figure Epistrophe is translated out of the English, as we saw in Deuteronomy 32:10 above. However, it can also happen that an Epistrophe can be put in the English Bible even though it does not appear in the original text.

**Acts 19:15 (KJV)**

And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I **know**, and Paul I **know**; but who are ye?"

In the Greek texts, the two words translated "know" are different, so there is no Epistrophe. For further study on figures of speech used in the Bible, visit [TruthOrTradition.com/figures](http://TruthOrTradition.com/figures)

**Note:**

1. E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, reprinted 1968).

**For many more figures of speech used in the Bible, visit [TruthOrTradition.com/figures](http://TruthOrTradition.com/figures)**

# Get Ready

## Teen's & 20's Camp is Coming!

(July 12-18, 2009 at Camp Vision)  
by Don Snedeker

The truth is: *Truth Matters!* That was the theme of last year's Teens & 20s Camp and we all had a chance to experience truth being the liberating force it is. The day after camp ended and I awoke in my own bed, I found myself longing to see the nametag-wearing people with whom I had spent the previous week. As the week progressed I graduated to *feeling* that we are living in a time of grace, a time in which God has enabled us to be ourselves without fear of reproach or judgment. In other words, we have freedom!

Truth has a way of making a single verse unexpectedly explode on the scene. The verse I'm thinking of is Ephesians 1:6 (KJV): "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." At camp we experienced being accepted. We know God accepts us, but people, well, that can be another story. In the world, it's a completely different story. So much so that some of us—myself included—felt awkward upon arriving at camp, like that feeling you get when you lean back in a chair, start to fall over, then catch yourself at the last second but you're still teetering on two legs while trying to get back on four legs. After just one day of camp, our chairs were back on solid ground, upright. It can take a little time for the bonds of self-doubt to dissipate, to really enjoy being alive. The world leaves a thick coat of graceless dust on us that, in the presence of love, flies off our bodies and scatters in the wind. God's grace puts on a show when Christians spend time together without the thieving presence of the things of the world: television, video games, secular music, computers. Without being hidden by these things, joy shows up and wants to spend a lot of time with you.

As the week progressed, the glow of joy provided enough safety to allow accumulated inner hurt to rear its head, asking for someone else to see it, not just the person renting it space in his or her heart. In a neighborhood of love, pain has a way of sidling up to its landlord and saying, *Let someone else see me. My walls have holes, the floors creak, the electricity is sporadic. If you can't fix up the place, let them help.* And many obeyed the cries of their own rejection, isolation and worthlessness, which had been internally raising their voices in discordant unity. Much of the hurt scurried away under the light of someone else's love.

The days were structured, and by the end of the week you *want* this schedule, possibly for the rest of your life: 7:30 AM, reveille (performed by a team of budding musicians playing 88¢ multi-colored recorders), then breakfast, flag raising and reading part of the US Constitution, praise and worship, study groups, lunch, free time, small group gatherings, dinner, praise and worship, a teaching, dessert, campfire, and lights out by 11:30 PM. This schedule covered many of the major spiritual food-groups: praising God, loving our neighbors, studying Scripture, and laughing.

I go to camp to minister to others and to be ministered to. I teach, am taught. I love, am loved. Encourage, am encouraged. Hug, am hugged. Smile, am smiled at. Throw water, am drenched. Laugh, am laughed with. Pray, am prayed for. Close my eyes, am left alone with God or nobody at all. Through this style of living, the sources of my own pain and joy became more visible to me and to others. Camp Vision is a place where people have something of substance to share with you and aren't rushing off to see a movie or e-mail someone. As the week progressed, God's grace danced and flew about the place, liberating people as only the things of God can. The more you put into it, the more you got out of it. And a lot of people got a whole lot out of it, reaping what they had sown.

An inspired camper taught us Canada's catchy new national song, "Go Bananas!" The testimonies at the campfires each night revealed that many people are proudly representing their area codes, while others really love their Teddy Bear. A young lady declared that the 45-minute quiet-time gave her clearer vision for her life. During the campfires, one man overcame his shyness and secretly removed campers' chairs after they had gotten up so they couldn't find them when they returned. The "Defending the Faith" class was moved to tears—I think that's what the water on their faces was—for the "Advanced Research" class having given them something to defend, and defended themselves by declaring war against the other group. One night a group of campers, as their bedtime approached, spontaneously joined in prayer on the basketball court. As the circle of campers expanded, holding hands with one another, praying, you could see that they were part of one of God's masterpieces.

As the days marched on, we increasingly felt the grace of God, revealing that our joy is somewhat hobbled—a bruise, a break, a wheelchair—by the graceless things of the world. But as our individual joy strengthened throughout the week, wheelchairs drifted off, carrying a mixed package of doubt and hurt and rejection, and went wherever it is wheelchairs go when given a shove without someone in them. Maybe they wandered onto the highway and got run over. Maybe they returned to Satan's shop where he shines them up, makes an alteration to give them a slightly different look in the hope of re-hooking us, and sends them back so we get back into our old wheelchairs without even knowing it. By getting together for a week at the Teens & 20s Camp, we have the wherewithal to prevent this from happening to each other. We help to keep each other from falling into emotional pits, which is frequently caused by the world's ways that produce a sense that nobody cares enough to help us. But people do care. Your brothers and sisters in Christ care, and at camp they are given the chance to show it. This is the truth, the beautiful truth. Truth matters. And when we live it, like we did at camp, the world isn't as daunting a place. Camp answered a lot of our questions, healed many of our wounds, and made our lives so much better.

**Download your registration packet at  
[STFonline.org/register](http://STFonline.org/register)**

# Fuel for the Fire

## Reaching out with the Word of God on the Internet

by Renee Speakes

Hello and God bless! My name is Renee Speakes, and I am honored to write these thoughts for you!

For the past several weeks I have been volunteering at the Spirit & Truth Fellowship Home Office, doing work on the MySpace ministry, an outreach that is used mainly in targeting Christian youth via a website that is accessed by many thousands of users daily. Through this I have gained a new understanding and respect for the many different ways and means through which God can reach His people. Years and years ago it might not have seemed possible that hundreds of people could be reached with the truth in a single day, and yet here we are. When I imagine what could be possible years from now, I feel truly excited and hopeful.

Volunteering at our Home Office has also taught me to have a servant's heart. There is an incredible amount of effort put into our ministry, and it has truly been a privilege for me to be a vessel in bringing the truth to hundreds of people. I feel I have also gained a great deal of understanding in the wide variation amongst believers. We can all ride under the same banner and still be as different as one stone from another. Small or large, vivid or subtle, it doesn't matter. A stone is still a stone in the forehead of the giant, and may God thoroughly and abundantly bless those who seek after Him!

Our TruthOrTradition.com MySpace page has reached almost fourteen thousand friends and gains more each day; that is not just a statistic, that is people—living, breathing, many of them our flesh and blood siblings in Christ—who have their ears and eyes open and are ready to receive the truth. How blessed I am, how blessed we all are, to be standing at the front line with them! It is an honor to fight the spiritual battle alongside these people.

I was recently visiting our TruthOrTradition.com Facebook page (another website which is accessed by hundreds daily, and through which the truth continues to be spread) and I came across several comments posted by people who had only recently discovered our ministry, and they were ecstatic to have finally, *finally* found something that sounded right, that was not a variegated mess of fact and fiction, but was a clear-cut, researched interpretation of God's Word. This is solid proof that people are out there searching for what is really right. We are not alone in this world. God is calling to the hearts and minds of His children...some to follow, others to lead...and I am honestly awestruck by the difference that He can formulate in peoples' lives.

Even in a day and age when Christianity is being disregarded, slandered, or by some other means and ways beaten down by many (while others push to have the speaking of Christ's name declared as "hate crime") our heavenly Father is continuing to work His wonders in so many different ways. It is an incredible blessing to see the influx of people joining the Body of Christ and seeking after the truth. I feel greatly privileged to participate in the work of this Ministry and I cannot wait to see what will come next!

Stay safe, keep praying, and do not lose heart; even when God seems so far away, He is truly nearer than you think. As it goes in the story of the man who walked with God in his dream, in the hard times when there was only one set of footprints, it was then that God carried him...and so He will carry you!

# Dear Sower

## How to Study the Bible

I wanted to tell the person who took the time and had the talent to upload John Schoenheit's Free Indeed Video on How to Study the Bible, "Thank you."

Although I've studied the Bible for many years I learned something from watching John. I wanted you to know that I'm going to be teaching this information to a local fellowship we attend, give them a link to this page and also have our kids watch this video to help them learn how to study the Bible.

So again, "THANKS!" I appreciate your labor of love and wanted to let you know how many others you are blessing. Bless you all!

Robyn (and Michael) Riddle  
Niceville, FL

### Editor's Note:

Please check out our videos at [TruthOrTradition.com/video](http://TruthOrTradition.com/video)

## Books & Podcast

Thank you for the great books and Podcast that you publish. They are making a BIG difference in my life.

Rob Danen  
Amsterdam, Netherlands

### Editor's Note:

Visit our online store at [STFonline.org/store](http://STFonline.org/store) and our free Podcast at [STFonline.org/podcast](http://STFonline.org/podcast)

## Online Resources

God bless and greetings! Now that I have a computer, I'm checking out all the stuff and audio teachings on [TruthOrTradition.com](http://TruthOrTradition.com). There is definitely plenty of stuff to check out. Keep up the good faith,

Henry Rea  
Essex Jct., VT

### Editor's Note:

[TruthOrTradition.com](http://TruthOrTradition.com) has over 1,100 articles grouped by subject (topics) on just about every biblical subject. It also has a bunch of free audio and video teachings.

## Role of Women in the Church

Thank you for the information on the role of women in the church. There was a lot of information on the link you sent me and some things I did not know about. Thank you again. Yours truly,

Shirley Rampersaud  
Queens, NY

### Editor's Note:

[TruthOrTradition.com/women](http://TruthOrTradition.com/women) has many empowering biblical truths on the role of women in the church.

## **Our MySpace Ministry**

I wanted to stop by to give my heartfelt appreciation for all those laboring in love for this TRUTH site and who continually seek to bless all current and future friends of the TruthOrTradition.com MySpace ministry.

In Christ Jesus,  
Gary (A MySpace.com friend)  
Washington

### **Editor's Note:**

We have over 14,000 friends on MySpace.com/TruthOrTradition. We would love to have you join in on the fun!

## **Nov/Dec 2008 Issue**

Greetings of peace! I just wanted to say that my family and me are so blessed with Spirit & Truth Fellowship International. We are now joining a fellowship here in the Philippines.

It has really helped us in finding the truth. I have just finished the Nov/Dec 2008 Sower magazine titled "Joy in Everyday Life." It was great! Especially the article titled "Living in the Yes!" It encouraged me more in finding the truth.

Also, the article on "Retelling the Christmas Story." Now I know what's the real story about Christmas. That issue was really good! Thank you!

God bless you all,  
Lovely Grace H. Endriga  
Philippines

### **Editor's Note:**

Visit [STFonline.org/backissues](http://STFonline.org/backissues) to read back issues of *The Sower* online.

## **Blessed by Audio Teachings**

It is very refreshing to hear truth. The teaching on "Building an Enduring Work of Truth" from January 2009 was and will remain a blessing to me. Truth, integrity, courage, and liberty are what I want to be walking in. I also very much enjoyed the teaching on "The Birth of Christ" (November 2008). Thank you for your enduring work of truth!

Dennis & Vicky Nunn  
Farmington, MO

### **Editor's Note:**

To listen to these teachings just go to [STFonline.org/podcast](http://STFonline.org/podcast) or [TruthOrTradition.com/audio](http://TruthOrTradition.com/audio)

**We would love to  
hear from you!**

**Email us at  
[STF@STFonline.org](mailto:STF@STFonline.org)**