



Christian Report

VOLUME 24 ISSUE 1 January 2024

A Little Mud Slinging

Beam me up, Scotty! How often have we wished for that capability, especially when driving cross country while trying to stay awake in places like Kansas? Not to be insulting to Kansas, but the endless miles of corn, wheat and soy bean fields aren't exactly the most riveting of sights. Voicing a 'beam me up' command would sure save on sore joints, gasoline, and gas station coffee.

In scripture, we find a unique teleport passage when in Acts 8 we read of Philip suddenly being whisked to a different location after leading the Ethiopian eunuch to faith in Christ. We are not sure why God chose to give Philip such a quick stage-left exit, but it is a thrilling account indicating the gospel of Jesus Christ

was not confined to only a tiny nation in the middle east. Instead, this Ethiopian eunuch was about to carry the gospel into Africa in much the same way as we later read of the apostle Paul taking the gospel into Europe. At one point in scripture, it describes the arrival of Jesus as being "when the fulness of time had come." It was during this time period that the Romans had established a network of roads making travel easier than it had ever been for that Ethiopian and Paul.

It is not clear to us why God chose to transport Philip to another location. We don't really see another instance of that in scripture. But there are numerous instances in the Bible where things only happen in 'one-offs'. For instance,

Jesus once healed a blind man by spitting in the dirt, making mud and applying it to his eyes. Another time, Jesus healed a blind man by merely telling him he was healed. Yet in another instance, Jesus healed two blind men traveling together by merely laying his hands on their eyes ... no mud involvement.



Many people try to put God in a box. They have systemized theologies on how He is supposed to act within the confines of their framework. We have hundreds of denominations centered around various interpretations of scripture whether it be based on prophecy, salvation or any other myriad points of difference. It is even said about one denomination (although they deny they are one) when

we get to heaven we will need to whisper because they think they are the only ones there.

It is possible the reason Jesus healed the blind using various methods is so that we do not focus upon the process he used and build kingdoms to slinging mud at those who are afflicted. If I hand you a stapled document, does it really matter if I used my left hand to hit the stapler, used my right hand, or if someone else stapled it for me? The bottom line is that your document is stapled nice and neatly for your use. I am sure those blind guys really weren't concerned with how Jesus did it, only the outcome.

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In 28 years of traveling in the military, I looked

Please excuse my feeble attempt at alliteration. Having begged the reader's pardon, allow me to define the word "foible" before I proceed further. Simply put, a foible is defined as "a minor weakness in someone's character (Oxford Dictionary)" and "a strange habit or characteristic that is seen as not important and not harming anyone (Cambridge Dictionary)."



Why do I claim that there are foibles associated to social media? I'm glad you asked. Actually, based on recent, and not so recent experiences using social media (primarily Facebook), it just seemed to pop up in my tired old brain. Now you know.

Additionally, I need to say that my remarks here are specific to self-professed Christian FB groups dedicated to enlightening the rest of us concerning the truth of a certain pet doctrines. For the purposes of this blog post allow me to use a specific example of one the several groups dedicated to rightly dividing the text of scripture.

As you know, to "rightly divide" the text of Scripture simply means to properly handle God's word. Literally, to "rightly divide" means "to cut straight." The Apostle Paul told young Pastor Timothy, "*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" (2 Tim 3:15).

But the detached nature of social media seems to short-circuit the Christian's call to rightly divide the Word. After all, it's so easy for one to sit (and hide) behind a screen without seeing another face, hear a human voice, or recognize heartfelt emotions. Significant aspects of human communication present in face-to-face dialogue are lost on social media platforms. In my opinion, this is at the heart of other serious issues.

Sitting alone behind a screen lets one make all their opinions (about anything) known to everyone in the

"room," often quite adamantly, without having to actually consider other's opinions, or intelligently substantiate their own. The writers steadfastly believe they are right, insisting that others accept their premise while dismissing opposing opinions. Sometimes the conversation even leads to calling names and using disparagements against others.

On the other hand, face-to-face communication allows for studying the Bible together, carefully examining relevant passages of scripture relevant to the matter at hand. Ripping passages out of their natural contexts to *prove* one's point is much easier when you are behind the screen. While this can occur during face-to-face dialogue, the tendency seems to be far less.

I've made it a project of mine to demonstrate, with as much gentleness and respect than I can muster up, and using excellent resources, as well as scripture itself, their 'interesting' beliefs. The responses I have received clearly demonstrate social media foible of wanting to win at all costs.

At this point I must freely admit that the attitudes and behaviors described above are not unique to those who claim to really truly 'rightly divide' scripture. We can find them all over social media, especially where individuals opinions are shared. Face it, people can be really ugly. Being able to hide behind a computer screen makes it worse. At least when we are sitting with one another, face-to-face, there's a better chance of honest, intelligent, and rational dialogue.

So now the question for this old soldier is whether or not to just completely ditch some social media venues or keep trying to reason with unreasonable people. One thing I know for sure is that the amount of time I spend researching topics raised on social media, in support of finding the truth or a matter or issue is often a great reminder of things previously learned, good for spiritual clarity and spiritual growth!



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Question: I will sometimes wake up prompted to pray for someone.

Last month I was prompted to pray something very confusing for someone I know. What exactly does this mean, and how can I best discern promptings from the Holy Spirit?



Answer: Promptings or leadings are a common experience for the Christian believer:

Simeon was “moved by the Spirit” to go into the temple where Joseph and Mary were dedicating Jesus to God (Luke 2:27).

Jesus was “led by the Spirit” into the desert to be tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1).

Paul was “compelled by the Spirit” to go to Jerusalem (Acts 20:22).

But, it is equally important to remember that there are other kinds of promptings that we can experience *besides* the leadings of the Holy Spirit. Some can be good promptings, while others can be bad:

Your heart can “prompt” you to give (Exodus 25:3).

But your sin can also “prompt” you to speak (Job 15:5).

And your troubled thoughts can “prompt” you to answer (Job 20:2).

The devil even “prompted” Judas to go out and betray Jesus (John 13:2).

Becoming a Christian does not ensure that all your promptings are now from God. As a matter of fact, the apostle John says:

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. (1 John 4:1)

Looking back over the examples I gave of promptings from the Bible,

- Some were from the Spirit of God,
- Others came from ourselves (our hearts, our sin, or our troubled thoughts), and
- Some even came from the devil himself.

So, it’s important to distinguish which “promptings” are really from us (or from evil spirits), and which ones are truly from God. When we look at Scripture to discern promptings of any kind, we should look at Scripture in its context. Remember, Satan is a master at twisting the Scriptures to mean something God never intended (see Luke 4).

Regarding prompts to pray, I think we can and should pray for the prompt, unless it clearly goes against Scripture. Often when the Holy Spirit prompts us to pray, it is to guard someone against sin, keep them safe physically or when under a spiritual attack. None of these go against Scripture, and praying for these things can do great good (or even prove life saving) for the one you’re praying for.

It’s also worth considering that the enemy of our souls doesn’t like God’s people praying and is unlikely to prompt us to pray. Even if we do pray for something that isn’t of God, God will know what to do with our request—He will probably disregard it since it is not according to His will (1 John 5:14).

As you continue to grow in holiness, you will also find yourself growing in your ability to discern God’s will:

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:2

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for opportunities to share my faith with people in airports and on flights. In those conversations I would often find fellow believers. We would share what the Lord had done in our lives and sometimes share our testimony about how we came to our individual experiences of salvation. Much of the time, we parted ways not even knowing what denominational persuasion either of us were. We just had a good time celebrating Jesus together. When the person was not a person of faith, I was not trying to get them to become a Baptist, a Pentecostal or a member of the chapel according to the gospel of Elvis in Las Vegas. I was just sharing Jesus and what a difference He could make in their life. Clear as mud?



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Running Off at the Mouth

Set a guard over my mouth, LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips. Psalm 141:3

Does your mouth get you in trouble? Most people could honestly say yes or at least there have probably been times when you say the wrong thing at the wrong time. Perhaps you hurt someone and never asked for forgiveness. Maybe you lied about something? Gossiped? The tongue indeed can cause lots of trouble if not kept in check.

Once something is said it is out there. It could be recorded to haunt you later or in form of a letter, text, or email. The main thing to remember is to ask God to help you if this is a weak area. Your mom may have told you at one time "If you can't say something good don't say it at all" and indeed how true that statement is. James chapter three in the New Testament talks about no man being able to control the tongue. Oh if you and I could just think before we communicate.

Let your yes be yes and your words and thoughts stay positive. You need right thinking and right thinking is developed by a steady diet of God's word. So what do you say...only good things, I hope!

PRAYER: Lord I thank you for your forgiveness and grace cause when I mess up with my mouth I am feeling horrible and I need your help to stay on track. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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