



"Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence."

—John Adams

29-Aug-25

The Subtle Power of Bias (Part One)

Human beings have always struggled with how their minds interpret [the world](#). No one sees it the same way. While we like to think of ourselves as rational and fair, we view the world through unique, hidden lenses. These lenses, called biases, influence how we perceive people and events, and they can even color how we see God's truth.

Bias has the potential to—and often does!—cloud our judgment and mislead us into believing something untrue. To live faithfully, we, as Christians, must learn to recognize our biases, admit that they may be a problem, and submit ourselves to God's perspective.

What is bias? Simply put, a bias is a preset inclination that skews our perspective in a particular direction. These personal perspectives come in a few varieties:

The first is *confirmation bias*, which concerns seeking information that supports one's existing beliefs. A Christian using this type of bias looks for scriptures or ideas that match his preconceived beliefs or opinions. Some

people even add things that a verse or passage does not actually say or speculate on meanings that push the bounds of what is written.

Unfortunately, a danger in this type of bias is that preconceived ideas are difficult to change. It leads us to becoming dogmatic in our approaches and beliefs, making us unwilling to listen to an alternative that may be true. In other words, we can fervently believe a lie and remain unaware of its falsity, dogmatically declaring something to be true while calling an alternative apostasy. Many scriptures and biblical examples tell us that this is part of human nature.

The second is what is known as *in-group bias*, which involves favoring those who are most like ourselves. This type of bias predisposes us toward the group or people with whom we identify. For instance, many older members of today's churches of [God](#) may be biased toward the [Worldwide Church of God](#) under Herbert Armstrong due to the experiences they had as members of it decades ago. This inclination toward what is familiar, which is natural and not necessarily wrong, can overflow into blindly favoring one group over another and, further, into offensive prejudice and intolerance.

The third and final bias we will consider is *anchoring bias*, which is placing too much weight on the first piece of information one hears. This type of bias anchors us to a belief because, as soon as we hear it, it makes sense or helps us make sense of an idea. It is often associated with people we usually agree with or highly respect. Many [false teachers](#) exploit this bias, leveraging their authority, position, or popularity as a foundation to deceive, and people [fall away](#) at their word without confirming whether what was said is actually true.

While these biases can help us make quick decisions under pressure, they can also distort the truth and lead us to inaccurate judgments. But, as Christians, we should not be satisfied with a surface-level explanation, but "test all things; hold fast what is good" ([1 Thessalonians 5:21](#)).

The Bible reveals a deeper concern about biases: They spring from the heart. [Jeremiah 17:9](#) warns, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Our biases are not neutral quirks of the human brain but reflect a spiritual brokenness that bends us away from seeing reality as God sees it.

The Bible is filled with examples of biases clouding human judgment. Consider the Pharisees during Jesus' ministry. They had a strong confirmation bias, using certain scriptures as proof-texts to support their religious views while avoiding clear ones; in-group bias, accepting Jews but not Samaritans, Romans, or heretics, as they styled [Jesus](#); and anchoring bias, believing whatever the trusted Jewish authorities, past or present, proclaimed to be true.

The Pharisees, along with the Sadducees and others among the Jewish hierarchy, sought reasons to reject Christ, who was challenging the established narrative by proclaiming the truth. They twisted evidence to fit their preconceived notions, which they had conceived through intellectual vanity and a thirst for power. Despite their traditions burdening the people, they defended them as having more authority than Scripture, and when He came to them in the flesh, even God Himself!

Even when Jesus performed undeniable miracles, they credited His power to demons ([Mark 3:22](#)) rather than admit the truth. Their judgment was blinded by spiritual pride, dogmatism, and self-preservation.

Their example is pertinent to us within the church today. Too frequently, someone in the church will come up with a "truth" and support it with "evidence." However, upon examination, the evidence is found to be forced to fit the narrative.

The keeping of the [Sabbath](#) is a prime example of this. God says amazingly little in particular about *how* to keep the Sabbath. The Sabbath command tells us to keep it holy and not do any customary work on it, and a few other passages give us some principles to apply to our observance. Of course, Jesus' example of keeping it is an overriding factor.

But many people impose unbiblical rules and regulations on keeping it, making it not a delight but a burden. The Pharisees had over 600 laws specific to the Sabbath, adding to Scripture dogmatic restrictions that God never imposed. We must be careful not to create our own "Talmud" of

extrabiblical rules, for they can become our biases. In [the gospel](#) accounts, we see this play out. Christ destroyed the Sabbath narrative the Pharisees followed! (See, for instance, [John 5:5-12](#), 16-18; 7:21-24.)

The Pharisees and Sadducees sought to kill Him because He was revealing their biases, showing how their prejudices were altering their judgment, and exposing their intellectual pride and unfounded dogmatism. It stands as a classic example of what these biases can do to a person or group. It creates division because an individual or a community refuses to verify their belief system when confronted with contradictory information, which may be the truth.

Next time, we will examine an example from the [Old Testament](#) and consider the spiritual consequences of our biases.

- Joshua Montgomery

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Foolishness of Bias](#)

by Martin G. Collins

Zeal is not the hallmark for truth. Saul, before he was transformed into Paul, was an evil zealot. Public education has been promoting tolerance for foolish points of view as they feel good to the holder and as long as one held them with sincerity. When it comes time for reaping the consequences, these existential moments do not seem very pleasant or practical any longer. The fool sabotages himself from attaining wisdom because he walks perpetually in darkness, with a careless, reckless brashness. Fools fall into the traps of fallacious reasoning. The wise man must not be diverted by these fallacies, but must patiently weigh the evidence, sifting through the facts, separating them from unfounded inferences, and measuring them against God's eternal principles revealed through His scriptures.

From the Archives: Featured Article

The Sin of Partiality

by Dan Elmore

We all have many biases—toward the food we eat, the cars we drive, the clothes we wear, and even the detergent we use in our washing machines! However, not all biases are good. Dan Elmore provides biblical examples of partiality that caused no end of troubles. More importantly, we need to avoid partiality for the problems it can cause in the church.

If you would like to subscribe to the C.G.G. Weekly newsletter, please visit our [Email Subscriptions page](#).
