



"Many of us Christians have become extremely skillful in arranging our lives so as to admit the truth of Christianity without being embarrassed by its implications."
—A.W. Tozer

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Misunderstood Truth

[Jesus Christ](#) was the most misunderstood man of His time, and not much has changed since. Part of that was intentional. [Matthew 13:15](#) spells out why He spoke in [parables](#): He intentionally wanted to blur the understanding of those listening. However, even when He was not speaking in parables, those standing by still failed to get it right. Most of those who did understand did not believe what He said. His own brothers and sisters paid Him no mind.

Perhaps they were not really listening. Back in about 1955, when in high school, I was a Baptist, and on Sunday evenings, in the half-hour between youth services and the main service, we would turn on the car radio and listen to Garner Ted Armstrong. We were fascinated only by his dynamic speaking, paying no attention to what he had to say.

It is plausible that Christ was such an effective speaker that many were drawn to listen without understanding. [John 7:45-46](#) suggests just this: "Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought him?" The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man." When He spoke, Jesus got the attention of His audience. John

records several instances of people not recognizing the spiritual content of His comments:

- [John 2:19-21](#): Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body.
- [John 3:3-4](#): Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the [kingdom of God](#)." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"
- [John 4:14-15](#): ". . . whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."
- [John 4:31-33](#): In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?"
- [John 6:51-52](#): "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of [the world](#)." The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"
- [John 8:21-22](#): Then Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your [sin](#). Where I go you cannot come." So the Jews said, "Will He kill Himself, because He says, 'Where I go you cannot come'?"

- [John 8:32-33](#): And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, 'You will be made free'?"

These misunderstanding people come from all walks of life: from those the Jews disdained most (Samaritan woman) to the most learned of Jewish society, the scribes and Pharisees. Even Christ's own disciples failed to grasp the meaning of some things He said. Of course, none of them had received the Holy Spirit, which gives understanding of spiritual truths.

However, even after [repentance](#), [baptism](#), and receiving the Holy Spirit, it is a constant battle to remain focused. The apostle Paul constantly exhorted the brethren in the various churches that he had started. They strayed from the Way in every possible direction, from the Corinthian church taking pride in their tolerance of sexual sin to the Hebrews who just drifted away.

What of us who have the Holy Spirit today? Do we not have spiritual understanding? Certainly, we do. Some might wonder, with the Holy Spirit guiding us, can we be led astray?

For the answer, all we need to do is to look around. Some of the spin-offs from our former association have departed from the truth in one or several points. Most of them still keep the [Sabbath](#), most still tithe. However, if a person believes something other than what [God](#) reveals in His Word, he can find a group that will accommodate his error. So, misunderstandings of truth exist among the spin-off churches.

In [John 5:38-40](#), Jesus tells us that even though people study the Scriptures diligently, some simply refuse to believe:

And you have not His word (His thought) living in your hearts, because you do not believe and adhere to and trust in and rely on Him Whom He has sent. [That is why you do not keep His message living in you, because you do not believe in the Messenger Whom He has sent.] You search and investigate and pore over the

Scriptures diligently, because you suppose and trust that you have eternal life through them. And these [very Scriptures] testify about Me! And still you are not willing [but refuse] to come to Me, so that you might have life. (*The Amplified Bible* [AMP])

And in [Hebrews 5:12-14](#) (AMP), the author observes that some stagnate in their growth:

For even though by this time you ought to be teaching others, you actually need someone to teach you over again the very first principles of God's Word. You have come to need milk, not solid food. For everyone who continues to feed on milk is obviously inexperienced and unskilled in the doctrine of righteousness (of conformity to the divine will in purpose, thought, and action), for he is a mere infant [not able to talk yet]! But solid food is for full-grown men, for those whose senses and mental faculties are trained by practice to discriminate and distinguish between what is morally good and noble and what is evil and contrary either to divine or human law.

John advises, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" ([1 John 4:1](#)). The exercise of spiritual muscle and acumen can be left in the dust of spiritual malaise. It makes one wonder, if a saint were in need of an effectual, fervent prayer from a righteous man, where would he find it?

Some are fortunate to follow a ministry dedicated to serving God in Spirit and truth ([John 4:24](#)), leading and guiding the brethren into good spiritual health. However, the load is not to be carried by the ministry alone. Members must be diligent to do their own studies of God's Word as well as listen to the inspired messages given by ministers.

As Paul notes in [Romans 15:4](#), "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through [patience](#) and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." The Bible is replete with admonitions of staying the course, not deviating from sound doctrine. We need to be strong in studying, fasting, and praying for each other, as we are all subject to the increasing dangers of this Satanic realm. Stay alert!

Make no mistake, there will be no misunderstandings at the Judgment Seat.

- Mike Fuhrer

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Spotting False Teachers](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

People who jump from one fellowship to another often do so for superficial reasons such as a personal slight or perhaps defending a pet doctrine. Ministers should be judged by the fruit that they produce in terms of their teaching or the examples that they set. Because fruit takes time to mature, we members ought to exercise patience, refraining from grumbling, or premature judging. In the checklist distinguishing the true shepherds from the hirelings, true shepherds are seen in their genuine concern for the flock, as opposed to hirelings who only devour or take advantage of the flock.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Whatever Happened to Gnosticism? Part One: False Knowledge](#)

by David C. Grabbe

"Gnosticism" sounds like an old and very dry Greek philosophy, the subject of a somnolent college lecture. Not so, says David Grabbe. Gnosticism is very much in vogue today in books and movies—and in the belief systems of a great many people who profess to be Christian.

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