



"We must allow the Word of God to confront us, to disturb our security, to undermine our complacency and to overthrow our patterns of thought and behavior."

—John R.W. Stott

01-Jun-18

## *Invisible Algorithms*

In 2011, Eli Pariser, CEO of viral content website *Upworthy*, gave a TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) Talk discussing what he called "filter bubbles" and their impact on society in this social media age. If we have used the Internet to view news, interact with others, or make purchases on websites like Amazon.com or Walmart.com, then we have undoubtedly experienced filter bubbles and the algorithms dictating choices for us, without our even knowing. Targeted advertisements show up within seconds of our viewing online items, urging us to follow through on that purchase or suggesting alternative items that might suit our tastes even more.

Utilizing information such as previous website history, friend lists from social media sites, click behavior on news headlines, location, and even the type of computer being used, invisible algorithms make guesses about the kind of content we would like to see, creating personalized searches to get us information as efficiently as possible. These computer algorithms have replaced the newspaper editors of old as the deciding factor in what constitutes a newsworthy topic. Our choices and decisions online quickly begin to create an intellectual bubble around us, isolating us to our own opinions and ideas and blocking out the viewpoints of others that the algorithms deem as disagreeable to our ideologies.

Seemingly unimportant and invisible choices in our lives weigh more heavily on our

spiritual health than we may realize. Through repetition, we can easily program algorithms in our own lives that drive our moral compasses. If we are not careful with what we program, we can cause ourselves to fall victim to our own negative feedback loops. Soon, we lose sight of the way [God](#) wants us to live our lives, all the while living in the illusion that we are doing God's will as Christians. Our everyday choices and decisions begin to reflect our self-created bubbles, numbing us to the fact that we are spiritually unhealthy.

By following these same worldly routines and patterns on a daily basis, we establish a bubble of perilous familiarity. Our bad habits become the norm, and we soon lose the ability to differentiate between God's way of life and the way [the world](#) is telling us to live. We create our own "spiritual" filter bubbles in which we isolate ourselves from growing "in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior [Jesus Christ](#)" ([II Peter 3:18](#)). Without healthy spiritual growth, we fall back on the worldly struggles and anxieties we have yet to overcome. These trials begin to trap us, destroying our growth and smothering the seed of God's Word in a blanket of thorns, just as Jesus described in the Parable of the Sower ([Matthew 13:7](#)).

This way of life is not the one we Christians are called to live. As the apostle Paul writes in [I Thessalonians 5:19-22](#): "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." We are told to test our [faith](#) and the things we believe for errors and falsities. Paul urges us not to fall into the trap of blindly following what society deems as the acceptable way of life.

Instead, we are to turn to God in study and prayer, asking Him to protect us from falling into the ungodly habits and repetitions of the world. If we continue to live in our isolated bubbles, ignoring the needs of those in the congregation, failing to participate in church activities, and avoiding the study of God's Word, then we are doomed to become spiritually stagnant and risk losing everything God's grace has given us.

Paul tells us that the old has passed away and that anyone living under Christ is a new creation ([II Corinthians 5:17](#)). If we are lost in our daily thought repetitions, we fail to realize fully the change needed in our lives that Paul so plainly mentions. As Christians, we are called to a newness of life, baptized into death, and brought to life through the example and sacrifice of Jesus Christ ([Romans 6:1-23](#)). We are told not to conform to the world, but to instead test everything, that we may be able to discern what is God's will among all the distractions in our lives ([Romans 12:2](#)). Failing to do so means we will undoubtedly fall short of Christ's expectations for our lives.

These personal bubbles play a crucial role in limiting our growth, as well as fostering

self-deception. A tragic biblical example of self-deception is the story of King Saul. One of the greatest tragedies in his life was his brazen defiance of God's warnings about his actions and how he was seemingly convinced that he was honoring God. Saul says in [1 Samuel 15:15](#), "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed."

Through Samuel, God had given Saul a direct command on how to handle the Amalekites, yet he freely chose to ignore God's instructions in favor of what he thought would honor Him more. He was unable to see his transgressions against God's commands because he was wrapped up in the system of delusion that he himself had created around his life choices. In his own mind, Saul could excuse his blatant disregard of God's instruction, having convinced himself that his personal opinions and decisions of right and wrong were one-and-the-same with God's. He no longer listened to God, who subsequently rejected him as king of Israel.

We must guard ourselves against the barrage of false information that surrounds us on a daily basis. Only through growing closer to Christ and His teachings can we begin to discern correctly what is and is not truth. A vast trove of information exists at our fingertips, but if we are not filtering what we are allowing into our minds, we may unknowingly be assisting in our own spiritual downfall.

The Pharisees in Jesus' day were convinced they were living godly lives, yet our Savior tells us in Matthew 23 that they had become blind to the true meaning of the Scriptures. Years of tradition and prideful choices created bubbles around them that refused to let the Messiah's truth into their hearts.

Peter warns, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your [adversary](#) the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" ([1 Peter 5:8](#)). If we are not careful to create godly bubbles of information around our minds, we may be heading to the same spiritual fate as those whom Christ Himself has rejected.

- Steven Skidmore

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## *World News Highlights*

### [Preparing to Rebuild the Temple - First Fruits' Ceremony Reenacted](#)

Prophecy News Watch/Breaking Israel News 24-May-18

CGG Weekly: Invisible Algorithms (01-Jun-18)

[\*\*American Health-Care Workers Are Committing Suicide in Unprecedented Numbers\*\*](#)

The Hill 31-May-18

[\*\*Al-Qaeda Warns Saudi Crown Prince Over 'Sin'\*\*](#)

Yahoo/AFP 01-Jun-18

[\*\*Sweeping Gene Survey Reveals New Facets of Evolution\*\*](#)

Phys.org 28-May-18

[\*\*Another Antibiotic Crisis: Fragile Supply Leads to Shortages\*\*](#)

Reuters 31-May-18

[\*\*'Heretic' in the Vatican\*\*](#)

Politico 28-May-18

[\*\*'This Is Worse': Ellicott City Devastated by Another Flood as Heavy Rain Drenches Baltimore Region\*\*](#)

The Baltimore Sun 28-May-18

[\*\*Lava Covers Potentially Explosive Well at Hawaii Geothermal Plant\*\*](#)

Reuters 28-May-18

[\*\*Erdogan's Turkey: a Caliphate in the Making?\*\*](#)

Prophecy News Watch/JNS.org 22-May-18

[\*\*German Nationalists March in Berlin, Face Counter-Protests\*\*](#)

Yahoo/Associated Press 27-May-18

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*New Transcripts*

[\*\*1435c: Nudging\*\*](#)

Given by Richard T. Ritenbaugh on 26-May-18

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*Prayer Requests*

New prayer request updates have been posted for the following people:

[Jerry Biles](#)

[Shelly Fenwick](#)

[Meredith Mimms](#)

[Emma Morse](#)

[Chantelle Zwanepoel](#)

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## *From the Archives: Featured Sermon*

### [Patterns That We Live With](#)

by Charles Whitaker

Charles Whitaker, reflecting on God's practice of working in patterns, points out that God has wired our minds to think in patterns, such as circles. Gestalt psychologists have demonstrated that, given a set of dots that suggest a circle, our minds are prone to automatically fill in the pattern. Other ubiquitous patterns that God has created take the form of dichotomies, such as day-night, land-sea, male-female and Jew-Gentile. The members of true dichotomies must be mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive. Hence, day and night are mutually exclusive, and there is no other alternative outside of the two genders God created, male and female—attempts of mankind aside. God's dichotomies are firmly fixed in this under-the-sun order of things. While God can manipulate these dichotomies, mankind is unable to alter the parameters established by God's dichotomies. Mankind, however, often attempts to change God's dichotomies, as feminists in the matter of gender. Likewise, the world's false religions have built a dichotomy of faith and works, while the Scriptures clearly show that no such dichotomy exists. We need to be thankful for all God's patterns, and be careful that we don't misuse them.

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## *From the Archives: Featured Article*

### [The Berean Example](#)

by Staff

The ancient Bereans have a wonderful biblical reputation. Just how special were these Macedonian Christians?

## *Featured Audio Schedule*

### **Friday Night Bible Study**

The next Bible Study will be **Acts (Part 27)**, given by **John W. Ritenbaugh** on **Friday 01-Jun-18**. The Bible Study will be continuously available from **6:00 pm Friday** until **12:00 pm Saturday (EST)**.

### **Daily Audio Programs**

Hear previous sermons, sermonettes, and Feast of Tabernacles messages, **Sunday through Friday**. [Available from the homepage](#).

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>
Sunday 03-Jun-18	Principles of the Body
Monday 04-Jun-18	The Great White Throne
Tuesday 05-Jun-18	God Works in Marvelous Ways (Part Two)
Wednesday 06-Jun-18	God's Work For Us
Thursday 07-Jun-18	Our Affinity to Christ
Friday 08-Jun-18	Does Doctrine Really Matter? (Part 4)

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