

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

By Ken L. Birks

We are living in an era in which the prophets, along with Jesus, the apostles of Christ, and the apostle Paul have spoken extensively about. As Isaiah said, "Truth has fallen in the streets." In all probability, we are living in the time that Jesus described as the coming birth pangs. This is a period in which the masses are under a deceptive cloud of darkness that is invading every nook and cranny of the world we live in. The master deceiver is busy at work casting his spells of darkness and deception as the whole world lies in his sway.¹ This deception is just part of the birth pangs that Jesus spoke of.

Matthew 24:4-8 *And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵For many will come in My Name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. ⁶And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilence, and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are the beginning of sorrows. (birth pangs NASB)*

As the master deceiver is busy at work casting his spells of darkness and deception, the Church is not exempt. Satan has his false prophets, apostles and teachers throughout the world spreading his lies and half-truths from the nations of the world's pulpits. The Church seems to be ignorant of Satan's methods as it marches onward with a watered down gospel that barely mentions the cross of Christ and the need for repentance and conversion, thus creating a vacuum for his deceptive lies to be firmly entrenched in the Church of Jesus Christ.

Jesus warned us about the many false christs and prophets that would arise to deceive the elect.² Paul said in his first epistle to Timothy, "*In latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.*"³ Paul also warned, the time would come when sound doctrine wouldn't be endured and people would turn away from the truth and go after false teachers, who tickled their ears.⁴ Peter also mentions in his second epistle, a warning about deceptive teachers and doctrines. He says:

2 Peter 2:1-3a *But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies,*

¹ 1 John 5:19

² Matthew 24:24-25

³ 1 Timothy 4:1

⁴ 2 Timothy 4:3-4

even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. ²And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words.

In our world today, false teaching is running rampant. With the advent of the internet anyone can have a voice without any kind of accountability whatsoever. It's the perfect tool for Satan and his cohorts to transform themselves into deceitful workers, who masquerade as apostles and teachers of Christ. As the apostle Paul said, *“And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.”*

As church attendance has become less and less important with the advent of the internet and other forms of media, a great vacuum has been formed for Satan to unleash his seductive lies with the antichrist spirit gaining momentum across the globe. John the beloved apostle spoke of the antichrist spirit that is already in the world and how we are to exercise discernment.

1 John 4:1-3 *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. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, ³and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.*

Jesus is coming back for a glorified Church of which the authority of hell will not be able to prevail against.⁵ The Church Jesus is building will be the pillar and ground of the truth just as He was and is.⁶ Unfortunately, Satan understands this more than the Church does. He's in the process of taking full advantage of the lack of discernment that is currently sweeping through the ranks of God's people. He uses innocent people who are caught up in their own wisdom rather than the foolishness of Christ. In their own wisdom, they preach and teach from perspectives that feed the consumerism and self-indulgent mentality of the masses. They pay little attention to the admonition Paul gave Timothy to rightly divide the truth. Thankfully, God is raising up godly ministers who will rightly divide the word of truth to lead His people back to a Church that is the pillar and ground of all truth.

It's time for godly leaders, who believe that all Scripture was inspired by God for instruction in righteousness and profitable for doctrine to rise up and declare the whole council of God's word.⁷ Just as Jesus and the apostles of Christ preached

⁵ Matthew 16:18

⁶ 1 Timothy 2:15

⁷ 2 Timothy 3:16, Acts 20:27-28

and taught the word, uncompromisingly, so must we in a day of darkness and gloom when sin is exalted as righteousness. It's time for godly leaders to stand up without the fear of losing the crowd's acceptance. There is a strong need to rightly divide the word of truth without twisting or wresting the Scriptures to appease the multitudes with words that tickle the ears.

Two Aspects of Feeding the sheep in Jesus' Conversation with Peter.

When Jesus spoke to Peter after His resurrection and asked him three times whether he loved him or not, He used two different Greek words for tending and feeding the sheep.⁸ As Jesus challenged Peter to feed the sheep, the two Greek words He used for the word “feed” were —*bosko* and *poimaino*. In a spiritual sense, *bosko* implies the feeding or preaching and teaching the whole council of God in an uncompromising manner.⁹ *Poimaino* involves the tending and care.¹⁰

Paul said he was innocent of the blood of all men by not being afraid to declare the whole council of God. He knew perfectly well what would happen when the word was not declared with authority. He was aware of savageness of Satan, and how he comes in, not sparing the flock. He, therefore warned the Ephesian elders to shepherd the church of God, through the whole council of God's word.

Acts 20:26-29 *Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. ²⁷For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole council of God. ²⁸Therefore take heed to yourselves and to the flock of God, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.*

Just as Jesus often spoke in a way that people were offended by the purity of the word that came forth from his lips, so must the teachers and preachers do today, if we are to continue to build the Church Jesus purchased with His own blood, we must build on the foundation of our Chief Cornerstone, Jesus Christ. No other foundation can be laid.¹¹

Teachers will Incur a Stricter Judgment.

James, the Lord's brother warned us that those who become teachers of God's word would incur a stricter judgement. I'm not sure what that fully entails, but it's enough to put the fear of God into me concerning what I teach. It compels me to

⁸ John 21-15-17

⁹ Strong's #1006 — Verb — βόσκω, bosko — bos'-ko

¹⁰ Strong's #4165 — Verb — ποιμαίνω, poimaino — poy-mah'ee-no

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 3:11

be diligent in presenting myself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.¹²

James 3:1 *My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*

One of Satan's favorite ploys is to twist the Scriptures in such a way that God's people are left in a wake of confusion and disbelief. Peter wrote, speaking of the coming of the Day of the Lord, in which the heavens would pass away with a great noise and the elements would melt with fervent heat that those who are unlearned and unstable would twist the Scriptures to their own destruction. In light of this we must consider what manner of persons we should be in holy conduct and godliness.¹³

2 Peter 3:14-17 *Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; ¹⁵and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. ¹⁷You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.*

We must understand that Satan knows and understands how to use the Scriptures for his own purposes. With Jesus, he tried twisting the Scriptures in such a way to tempt him. However, Jesus defeated Satan because He was well immersed in the Scriptures and knew how to use them in wielding the sword. As ministers of God's word, we must know how to wield the sword of the Spirit as well. When we compromise the authority we have in the word of God, by twisting the Scriptures to our own advantage, we give into Satan's ploys and give him a foothold in the Church Jesus is building. We must learn to shepherd the Church Jesus is building by maintaining an integrity to the word of God in all matters. It is the word that is quicker and sharper than any two-edged sword.¹⁴ Therefore, we have a God-given responsibility to wield it in such a way that it brings glory and honor unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why James said teachers shall incur a stricter judgment.

¹² 2 Timothy 2:15

¹³ 2 Peter 3:7-11

¹⁴ Hebrews 4:12

Principles for Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

2 Timothy 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

As Paul wrote to young Timothy, we are to rightly divide the word of truth. Rightly dividing the word of truth doesn't just happen. There are a number of principles that are necessary for it to happen that must be engaged by those who seek to uncover the buried treasure that lies between the covers of this great book known as the Bible.

Believe all Scripture is Inspired by God.

Believing that all Scripture is inspired by God is the foundation of our faith. If we don't believe this, then, we are in doubt concerning the death and resurrection of Christ upon whom our salvation rests. It is the first and foremost principle when it comes to rightly dividing the word of truth. Believing in the inspired word is what makes us complete in God and equips us for every good work as seen in the following passage of Scripture.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for the instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

We do not have the prerogative to pick and choose which Scriptures are inspired by God and which aren't. If this were so, there would be no foundation on which to build and interpret doctrine. All doctrine must be based on believing all Scripture is divinely inspired by God. If you don't believe this, then we have nothing further to discuss. The conversation ends there, because prophecy never came by the will of man, but Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

If we are to engage in the prophetic purposes God has for our generation, we must embrace the divine inspiration of Scriptures with all of our hearts, being fully persuaded and convinced, which enables us to be devoted to the truths contained therein. It is from the Scriptures that we receive further revelation and understanding of the times we are living in and what God has prepared for us.

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

¹⁵ 2 Peter 1:21

As the Holy Spirit breathes on the Scriptures, they become alive in our hearts discerning the thoughts and intents of our hearts. In other words, it allows our thoughts to come into alignment with God's thoughts, which enables our minds to plan our ways,¹⁶ and discern doctrinal truths.

Be Fully Immersed in the Foundational Principles.

Before a house can be built, it must have a sure foundation to build upon. In His word, God has referred to His people as a spiritual house and a temple.¹⁷ If we are to be all that God has purposed for our lives, we must have a strong spiritual foundation. Jesus shared about this when He talked about building on the rock. He made a distinction between those who build on sand and those whose houses are built on the rock. He said the foolish build on sand with no foundation, while the wise build on a firm foundation of rock.¹⁸

Peter says we are to desire the pure milk of the word that we may grow thereby.¹⁹ The writer of the book of Hebrews identifies the milk of the word as the elementary principles of Christ that must be in our lives before we are permitted to go on to maturity.²⁰ In other words, we must have a spiritual building permit before we can move forward in our understanding and revelation of God's word. The foundational stones of God's word are a necessity before moving forward into deeper spiritual truths and realms. Otherwise, we will produce nothing but dead works, which amount to nothing more than wood, hay or stubble with a house built on sand.²¹

Hebrews 5:12-14 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³**For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.** ¹⁴But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

What the writer is saying here is, until you have become skilled in the first principles, you will not be able to rightly divide the word of truth. That is reserved for those who have immersed themselves in the elementary principles of Christ and are able to chew on the meat of God's word. The next section in Hebrews identifies what those principles are.

¹⁶ Proverbs 16:3,9

¹⁷ 2 Peter 2:5, 1 Corinthians 6:19, Ephesians 2:19-22

¹⁸ Matthew 7:24-27

¹⁹ 1 Peter 1-3

²⁰ Hebrews 5:12-13, 6:1-3

²¹ 1 Corinthians 3:12-16

Hebrews 6:1-3 *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith towards God, ²of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³And this we will do if God Permits.²²*

The prophet, Isaiah basically says something very similar. He speaks of the knowledge that comes to those who are weaned from the milk.

Isaiah 28:9-10 *Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? ¹⁰For precept must be upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.”*

Those of the wise virgin class are those who take the time to immerse themselves in the elementary principles of Christ, building a sure foundation that will weather whatever storms come their way. Those who build on sand will be swallowed up in the great falling away, having fallen into the traps of the enemy. As Paul so aptly says, *“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”²³*

If our understanding of the elementary principles of Christ is incorrect, it will affect our ability to rightly divide the heavier truths of God’s word. We will not be able to discover the divine harmony of the revelation of His word. The pieces of the puzzle won’t fit together to paint a complete picture.

We Must Believe there is a Divine Harmony of Revelation.

If we believe that all Scripture was inspired by God, then we must also believe there is a divine harmony of revelation that comes forth from Scripture. If holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit as Peter appropriately wrote, we must believe that God spoke with continuity throughout the Bible. Scripture will interpret Scripture.

2 Peter 1:20-21 *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

²² Please note: Complete teachings on all these subjects are available from the following sources:
www.kenbirks.com/Bible-studies, www.straitarrow.net/bible-studies/, www.kenbirks.com/perspectives-both/

²³ 1 Corinthians 3:11

This means that all doctrines must stand in agreement with one another. They must fit together in divine harmony without contradicting one another. Just as Paul exhorted Timothy to take heed to doctrine, we must do the same.²⁴ In other words, we must be careful in how we treat it.

We must be honest and forthright in our understanding of the Scriptures without bias. As I have said earlier, we must be more loyal to the purity of God's word than to various streams of thought of how we were trained to think. We must continually examine our doctrinal beliefs as we entertain new thought patterns. The Bereans were considered more Noble because they did not readily accept what Paul was saying. They studied the Scriptures for themselves to make sure what he was saying was right. We should be doing the same.

The Holy Spirit Teaches us.

We have the same Holy Spirit within us as the holy men and prophets of old had. He is in each of us to teach us as we allow the Scriptures to be opened in our understanding. It is the Holy Spirit who searches the heart of the Father to reveal things unto us.²⁵ And it's the Father's desire to give us the spirit of revelation so that He can teach us.²⁶

1 John 2:20, 27 *But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. ²⁷But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.*

God has designed His word and His Spirit to partner together in all things, including how we interpret doctrine. For example, on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the early believers as a mighty rushing wind with tongues of fire, Peter relied on the Scriptures to interpret what was happening.²⁷ Jesus often referred to the Scriptures as He explained how the Father was working in and through Him as seen in the following passage.

Luke 4:17-19,21 *And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: ¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the*

²⁴ 1 Timothy 4:12-13

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 2:7-11

²⁶ Ephesians 1:17-18

²⁷ Acts 2:16-21

blind, to set at Liberty those who are oppressed; ¹⁹to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” ²¹And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (see also the passages in the footnote)²⁸

The apostles of Christ referred to the Scriptures on many occasions as they were developing doctrine and interpreting experiences that were coming their way. For example, when they needed someone to take Judas' place, they relied on Scripture for direction.²⁹ Paul often referred to the Scriptures when making doctrinal points as well. Let us not forget as Paul wrote, *“All Scripture is profitable for doctrine.”*³⁰ One of the most important aspects of our faith in Christ is based on a Scripture he referred to from the Old Testament.

Romans 1:16-17 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”*³¹

Even though the Holy Spirit teaches us as the beloved apostle John stated, does that mean we don't need anointed teachers to teach us as well? Absolutely not! We are to glean from the anointed teachers He places in our midst, but we are also to be like the Bereans. They not only received the word with all readiness, but searched the Scriptures for themselves to make sure what they were hearing was right.³² They were learning how to rightly divide the truth.

I have often told my Bible students, “Don't believe something just because I told you, study it for yourself so that you will own it.” It's when we study to show ourselves approved as a workman, who does not need to be ashamed own the truth. It also gets woven into the fiber of our being. This is part of what gives us the spiritual authority that is needed to come against the devices of the enemy.

God Often Speaks in Riddles, and Mysteries.

The Bible is full of mysteries, dark sayings and riddles for us to discover and search out before we can properly understand all that is contained in the Father's will and purpose for our lives and the Church.

²⁸ Matthew 21:13, 26:24, 31, Mark 7:6, Luke 24:46

²⁹ Acts 1:20

³⁰ 2 Timothy 3:16

³¹ Habakkuk 2:4

³² Acts 17:11

Romans 16:25 *Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began.*

Ephesians 1:7,9-10 *In Him we have redemption...⁹having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,¹⁰that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.*

It's the Father's desire to reveal the mystery of His will to us as we rightly divide His word of truth. However, His truths are concealed so that only those who have ears to hear can hear and interpret His word.

Proverbs 1:5-6 *A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will attain to wise council, to understand a proverb and an enigma, the words of the wise and their riddles.*

Proverbs 25:2 *It is The glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings to search out a matter.*

Throughout the writings of Paul, he refers to the gospel as God's mystery in Christ that was hidden for ages, but has now to be revealed in us.³³ Jesus often spoke in parables so that only those who had ears to hear would know the mysteries of the kingdom.³⁴ Paul also spoke of certain truths that were mysteries such as the Godhead, the second coming, the Church as a bride, the mystery of godliness and more.³⁵

The book of Revelation says, the mystery of God will be finished in the days of the sounding of the seventh trumpet.³⁶ When we arise to meet Jesus in the clouds all mysteries will be solved. We will be known as He is. That which is perfect will be complete. However, there are still many mysteries to be revealed before He returns.

It is in the study of the Scriptures with the aid of the Holy Spirit that we are led from one clue to another as the mysteries of His word are opened to our spiritual understanding. By allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture the great mysteries and riddles concealed in God's word are solved.

³³ Colossians 1:26-27, 2:2,

³⁴ Luke 8:10, Mark 4:11

³⁵ Romans 11:25, 16:25, 1 Corinthians 4:1,15:51, Ephesians 5:32, 1 Timothy 3:9, 16

³⁶ Revelation 10:7

The Bible is a gigantic puzzle with many pieces that must be interlocked together to fully understand and solve the mysteries contained therein. As with any puzzle, the pieces must interlock together before the complete picture can be seen. The Bible is no different. There are many pieces to the mysteries contained therein that must be interlocked together before the complete picture of who God is and what His purposes are in heaven and earth. Some of the pieces are quite simple and interlock together easily while others are somewhat nebulous and difficult to find how they fit in with the whole. With the aid of the Holy Spirit, He is able to help us fit all the pieces together in divine harmony.

Over the years, I have put together many jigsaw puzzles. I have always found that putting the border pieces together first is very helpful. Once the border pieces are all put together, it is much easier to assemble the remaining pieces of the puzzle. I have a five-year old granddaughter who loves to put puzzles together. I often spend time with her putting them together. I have found that she likes to pick out her favorite part of the puzzle from looking at the box. She will begin to find the pieces that belong to the picture she is seeing. While she's doing that, I find myself putting the border together while she's working on a cluster that must be fitted in at some point. Once the border is together and her cluster is complete, we must then find the pieces that interlock the border to the cluster. This is the more difficult part, because the pieces are not so obvious as the pieces are more of a mixture of the two parts that need to be joined together. Sometimes we will have a couple of clusters we are working on that must be fitted and joined together at some point.

The Bible is very similar to a jigsaw puzzle. It has many mysteries that must be fitted together in divine harmony to see the whole picture. The border pieces are those pieces that are straight forward and easily interpreted, as particular Scriptures speak for themselves and are obvious to their meaning. When trying to determine the mind of God in any given subject it is best to start with the border pieces. With the border pieces in place, it's much easier to fit various clusters of thought into the whole as those pieces that are somewhat nebulous are found.

The problem in determining true doctrine is that we have many clusters of thought that don't fit together in harmony with one another. Many Scriptures are vague in their meaning. When we try to build on that which is indefinite rather than that which is precise and easily understood, we end up with a distortion of the truth. When you build on that which is straight forward and easily understood, you will eventually find the connecting pieces that allow the ambiguous Scriptures to be connected.

We Must Submit our Thinking Process to the Purity of God's Word.

We all have strongholds of thinking that must be torn down and brought into the captivity of Christ.³⁷ It will take a willingness to break down our old ways of thinking and processing before we can have open minds to fully receive all that God has for us from the purity of His word. We must be willing to cast down those arguments that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. It is the purity of God's word that we must conform our thinking and be loyal to, if we are to stop the deception that is in the Church. This is a major area of concern when it comes to rightly dividing the word of truth.

Psalm 12:6 *The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver, tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.*

Psalm 119:140 *Your Word is very pure; therefore, Your servant loves it.*

Proverbs 30:5 *Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.*

We all come from various backgrounds that have taught us to think in various ways, whether we realize it or not. As a man thinks, so is he. The problem is, we become loyal to those ways rather than the purity of God's word. We may have certain doctrinal positions, simply because that's the way we were taught. Sometimes our identity and security are so connected to a particular stream or denomination that we are afraid to embrace or even consider something other than what we have been taught. When we become more connected to a stream of consciousness rather than the Lord Jesus Christ and His word, we open ourselves up to deception and deceit. As Paul wrote, we must be transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that we can prove what the good and acceptable and perfect will of God is.³⁸

If we are dedicated servants of God who desire to be vessels of honor to whom the Lord uses for His prophetic purposes, in our generation, we must conform our thinking to the purity of His word, rather than a particular stream or denomination.

The Word Takes Precedence Over Experience

The word must take precedence over the spirit because the word is pure and tested as seen in the afore mentioned Scriptures. However, even though the Holy Spirit is perfect and pure, our experiences are subjective. When the Spirit's revelation enters our spirit, it is first pure and unadulterated. It then must pass through the doorways of our mind and be submitted to God's Word to remain pure. Without the

³⁷ 2 Corinthians 10:5

³⁸ Romans 12,2

purity of God's Word, His revelation is distilled through our un-sanctified thoughts and emotions and loses its purity.

When we allow experience to dictate doctrine, we become vulnerable to Satan's devices. When we base doctrine on spiritual experiences there is no continuity. Everyone's experiences vary in various degrees depending on a person's emotions. We are not to think beyond the word.³⁹ In other words, our thoughts and emotions are to be subject to God's word, bringing every thought into its captivity. We are to test and prove all things.⁴⁰

There are many winds that blow through the body of Christ—some good and some bad. We are to test all things by the word, holding fast to that which is true, while discarding that which is false. Some of the winds that come and go in the Church are based more on personal experiences than the purity of God's word. They are often referred to as extra Biblical experiences. As a result, they become movements throughout the body of Christ, especially in the ranks of what has been coined as "Charismatic Believers." Don't get me wrong! I am also a Charismatic believer, but I'm also a strong believer in maintaining an integrity to the purity of God's word, which has been tested.

My spiritual father in the Lord, Dick Benjamin, coined a term that I think is quite good. He said, "Test the wind by the word." A major issue I have with some of my Charismatic brothers and sisters is that there doesn't seem to be much discernment when it comes to various winds blowing through the Church. There's an ignorance to the fact that we have an enemy who loves to stir things up, causing all kinds of confusion and distrust amongst ourselves. Paul spoke of this when he said *"We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting."*

Satan is a deceitful plotter and is well aware of how gullible many Christians can be because of their lack of integrity when it comes to holding to the purity of God's word. This will only get worse as we come closer and closer to the second coming of Christ. Now is the time to re-examine what we believe and adhere to the purity of His word by rightly dividing it.

Many are still children in their understanding of God's word. Because the Church has focused so much on a consumerism and seeker mentality in the past few decades, God's people are quite illiterate when it comes to His word. They are

³⁹ 1 Corinthians 4:6

⁴⁰ 2 Corinthians 10:5, 1 Thessalonians 5:21

easy pickings for Satan's deceitful plotting. We must abandon smoke and mirror theology and adhere to the purity of God's word.

Satan also understands the deceitfulness of the human heart and develops plans accordingly. The prophet Jeremiah said it best when he said, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings."*⁴¹

If God in His sovereignty wants to knock me down and cause me to laugh, shake, bark like a dog, howl like a lion or whatever, that's His prerogative. But, it's my responsibility with what I do with it. I don't have the right to try and duplicate something to others or start a movement if it's not clearly defined in His Word. God will test our minds and give us according to our ways even if they're wrong. This is where the deception comes in. Just because God doesn't stop us, we have a tendency to think He's putting His approval on it.

What often happens in Charismatic circles, is that a particular church may start to have what they deem as an outpouring of the Spirit, which attracts multitudes coming to their services. As a result, people from other parts of the country and even the world flock to them and then go back to their churches and try to duplicate what they saw. And before you know it, another wind is blowing and a movement is launched with very little discernment. A movement needs to be thoroughly tested by the word, in its infancy, before it is released further. Otherwise where do we draw the line in weirdness. Without drawing a line by testing the movement by the word, we swing the door wide open for Satan to come in with his deceptive ploys. Let's not forget, he has the ability to transform his ministers into false prophets and apostles who are able to perform signs and wonders. We are not to be ignorant of his devices. A movement or revival should take us further into God's prophetic purposes rather than being a spiritual playground.

A great example of how the word and Spirit work together for God's prophetic purposes to come forth can be found when the day of Pentecost was fully fulfilled in the book of Acts. By rightly dividing the word of truth, Peter was able to define what was happening in the spiritual realm as the Holy Spirit suddenly came on them as a mighty rushing wind with tongues of fire. When the sound was heard, the multitudes came together and were confused, amazed, and perplexed, while others mocked saying, "They are drunk and full of new wine."⁴²

⁴¹ Jeremiah 17:9-10

⁴² Acts 2:1-14

Peter, full of the Holy Spirit and the word of God stood up and interpreted what was happening by allowing the Scriptures to interpret the prophetic event. He began to quote from the prophet Joel concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that had been promised. Instead of this event being a spiritual playground with people perplexed and filled with confusion, he was able to identify the prophetic purpose that was being fulfilled in their presence.⁴³ As a result these early disciples went forth in their generation fulfilling the purposes of God just as David had done for his generation.

We still have many prophetic purposes and waves of revival yet ahead to be fulfilled before Jesus returns for His bride. Let us esteem His word by rightly dividing it. As we do, it will be a light unto our paths as we point the way for others to follow. Let us not leave a wake of perplexity, confusion and mocking behind us by not giving the word of God preference over how the Holy Spirit speaks to us. We must allow our Holy Spirit inspired thoughts and experiences to be sanctified by the washing of His word.

May God bless you mightily as you go forth fulfilling His prophetic purposes for your lives and the kingdom of God. Allow His zeal to set you on fire as one of His flaming ministers filled with passion and zeal to take the kingdom by force.

The poem on the following page expresses the essence of this chapter.

⁴³ Acts 2:14-39

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth – by Ken L. Birks

©2018 Straight Arrow Ministries

Beguiled by the enemy, truth in the streets falls and disappears.
With seeds of deception sown, the church cries out in tears.
As truth disappears, darkness settles across the globe.
Casting his spells of deception, the world lies in his sway.
False teaching runs rampant, as the enemy has his say.

Casting off the spells of darkness, the Church rises in relief
Called to be the pillar and ground of all truth, she rises in belief.
Believing that all Scripture is inspired by God, she mends.
Called to rightly divide the word of truth, she makes amends.
As she repents, she returns to her foundation to rebuild.

With no other foundation to build upon, she rightly divides.
Immersing herself in the elementary principles, she presides.
Line upon line, here a little, there a little, she speaks with truth.
No longer caught in self-deception, she speaks truth in love.
With divine harmony of revelation in play, she comes alive.

Fully immersed in the unction of the Spirit, she teaches, reaffirmed.
With insight into riddles and mysteries, deeper truths are discerned.
With her thinking process submitted to the word, she rightly divides.
As the word takes precedence over the Spirit, in truth, she delivers
Knowing teachers receive a stricter judgment, she builds the pillars.

With the pillars of truth being built, light begins to dispel the darkness.
The glory of the Father begins to rise upon His people as truth increases.
Not placating for the sake of relevancy, truth is restored in the streets.
As truth restores, light penetrates those once caught in aimlessness.
Without blinders, multitudes see the light, now penetrating the darkness.

Scripture References: 2 Timothy 2:15, Isaiah 59:14, 60:2, 1 John 5:19, 2 Timothy 3:15, Isaiah 60:1, Romans 13:12, 1 Timothy 3:15, 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 Corinthians 3:9-11, Hebrews 5:12-14, Isaiah 28:9-10, Ephesians 4:14-15, 1 Peter 1:20, 1 John 2:20, 27, 2 Corinthians 20:5, Romans 12:2, James 3:1.