

spiritual Health

The Nature of God

We live in a day when people look at the concept of God and attempt to define him according to some sort of preconceived ideas. We live in such a self centered society that we define God to be like us. Such a definition is very narrow and short sighted.

Once one looks into the Bible, the nature and character of God begins to take on some very new and broad dimensions. What we find is often most surprising. We also quickly learn that the nature and character of God is not at all limited to the minuteness of man.

The Will of God

The first description of God in the Bible book of Ephesians 1:1, tells us that God has a will. God's will supersedes the will of man. God's will impacts the conduct of man. It is a will which extends authority and responsibility to man.

There are so many people among us who think that God somehow is incapable of affecting the lives of people in this present day. They deny there is a God. Yet this verse tells us that God is alive. God deals directly in the lives of people today.

The Fatherhood of God

Verse 2 tells us that God is to be identified and understood to have a father like characteristic. This suggests a very close relationship may be had with God. God provides that one might enjoy a family closeness and personal relationship as one might enjoy with a personal father.

Entering into such a relationship whereby God would be your father may be understood by nature. In order for a person to have a father, one must be born into a family situation. In creation, fatherhood is not known naturally according to any other terms.

The Benefits of this Family Relationship

God the father gives two benefits toward those He fathers. The first is "grace." The second is "peace."

Grace is the extension of some benefit which provides a gratifying experience. This would include his manner toward us and His influence upon our lives. His children then receive this according to his manner of conduct surrounding us and as a result of his beneficial actions which directly affect us. One needs to also consider that the divine influence upon the heart is no small matter. Such benefit also leads to the second benefit.

Peace. Man seeks peace from all quarters. Yet the eternal one, the almighty one extends peace to those who can call Him Father. Real peace can only be had when one is joined to their Father. It must be recognized that in a good home, when the father arrives, there comes with his arrival, tranquility. The bickering among children ends. One who controls, has authority, and exercises just dominion, brings peace to all as they enjoy the entrance of his presence.

Peace! Peace!
Wonderful peace,
coming down from the Father above,
Sweep over my spirit
forever, I pray,
in the fathomless billows of love.

What a treasure I have
in this wonderful peace
Buried deep in the heart of my soul,
So secure that no power can mine it away
While the years of eternity roll

-Wonderful Peace by W.D. Cornell,

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This is a periodic publication purposed to raise the interest and knowledge of unbelievers in the person and character of God their creator. The second purpose is to guide believers into a closer relationship with their God, who is their Father. The intended result would be that they would be inspired to practice their faith and live according to God's channel of blessing for this age, the local church.

I am a Christian if:

I know who Jesus is

- **Jesus is the creator of the heavens and the earth.**
 - Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
 - **Jesus is God. John 1:1**
 - **Jesus is the expression of God, the Word. John 1:1**
 - **In the beginning Jesus was. John 1:1**
 - Jesus was not created. He had no beginning. He was before the beginning.
 - Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
 - **Jesus is the basis for all life. John 1:4**
 - **Jesus' life is the light of men.**
 - Joh 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

- **Jesus made the world.**
 - Joh 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
- **Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us.**
 - Joh 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.
- **Jesus is described as the son of God and was with Him and declares Him.**
 - Joh 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

I know that I did not meet the standard of righteousness required to stand before God (to enter into the presence of God)

- **I failed to comprehend the light of God.**
 - Joh 1:5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.
- **I did not know God from my birth.**
 - Joh 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
- **I had no inclination to receive Him, Jesus.**
 - Joh 1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

When I was enlightened with the issues of life, I received Jesus.

- Joh 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:
 - Joh 1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
 - 1Jo 4:15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.
 - 1Jo 5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.
 - 1Jo 5:10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.
1Jo 5:11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.
1Jo 5:12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.
1Jo 5:13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.
1Jo 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:
1Jo 5:15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.
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What is Spirituality?

A lot of people talk about being spiritual. For many, being spiritual is spoken of with a certain reverence. But how many people really have any kind of Godly perception of what spirituality means?

Philippians 1.10

That ye may approve (test for approval) **things that are excellent** (that which surpasses) **that ye may be sincere** (judged by sunlight) **and without offense** (actively inoffensive, that is, not leading into sin; passively faultless, that is, not led into sin:) **til the day of Christ**

Phi 1:11 **Being filled with the fruits of righteousness**, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Because we live in a day in which people have little if any concept of absolute right and wrong, this scripture seems strange in deed.

The issue of something being excellent, up to this point, was always judged to be an issue of personal discernment. But verse 11 tells us that the matter of whether something is righteousness (excellent) or not is now defined by one who is outside of ourselves. The discernment is now based upon the opinion of Jesus Christ. Now instead of being faced with the multiple opinions of all who are involved, we only concern ourselves with the opinion of Jesus Christ. This may seem in one way to be very limiting. Yet it also brings an end to conflicts which arises from differences of opinion.

Now when a matter is brought up for discussion, the appeal for quality or discernment is tested by the Son of Righteousness whose glory is a very great and shining light. We hold the decision-making up to this light. If there are any flaws, it is based upon God's standard. God's standard reveals

flaws and defects. God's light does not allow for deceit. God's light does not allow for selfishness. God's light points out pride, hatred, and all manner of evil which we might otherwise disguise as good.

Church, What Is It?

We live in an age, where it is claimed, that people are abandoning the "church" in droves. The stated excuses are varied. Many come up with "church alternatives." These alternatives generally prove most unsatisfactory. They are not church. God said, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18) He was referring to church. Too many people are playing church today. Many do not really want church because they do not want to be holy. In their heart, they despise God and His express will.

If being a Christian was defined as one who attended his local church every Sunday, there would be very few Christians. **Yet, everyone who does not attend church every Sunday is telling the Christian who does and the unsaved that they are living in open sin.** To continue in sin is an indicator that they really may not be a part of the family of God, according to 1 John. We cannot know a person's heart. We can only observe their outward actions and try to discern.

Mat 7:20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

The Bible tells us that the church exists as the primary tool of God in this present age. (Ephesians 3:21) The church is clearly the vehicle which God has chosen for this age to:

Ephesians 3:8 ". . . preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

9 And to make all men see what is the

fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."

To say that the church is obsolete and not useful for this age is to go directly against the expressed will of God and invites a serving of His wrath. This passage clearly emphasizes that a primary purpose of the church is to make known and declare the manifold wisdom of God to men and also to government.

It is only in the context of the church that a believer may please God and promote God's will, as it says in Hebrews:

Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Hebrews 2:10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Hebrews 2:11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

Hebrews 2:12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

It is not according to the flighty preferences of man that an institution or a belief should come about. It is by the will of god and

according to obedience to Him that a matter is to be sanctified and willed. To do otherwise is disobedience and sin. It is abhorred by God. It will not be blessed. We either do things His way or no way.

Colossians 1:24 says that the church is identified as being his body "for his body's sake, which is the church". **Paul here identified the church as being a specific body or group of believers** for which he was willing to suffer persecution. Earlier Paul made specific effort to persecute the church, according to Galatians 1:13. The church, which is His body, is the fullness of Him which filleth all in all. Ephesians 1:22-23. They were a clearly identified group of people who gathered in various locations. It is clear by example and context that those who were called Christians were gathered out into specific congregations or churches.

1 Corinthians 4:17 indicates that **these people met for purposes of hearing a speaker. There were gatherings for worship, for teaching purposes, for prayer, they sang and they gathered in money for specific needs.** Romans 16:5 indicate that some churches met in houses. But today, many who propose house churches are gathering people and calling it church, but do not provide such things which make it any different that just a gathering of friends. Many such meetings do not meet the scriptural indications of their being a church.

A church has a means of identifying who is a part of the number and who is not. This identity is based upon doctrine or belief. This identity is based upon the act of baptism whereby one partakes in the physical act of immersion which act is understood by the world as a defining mark of change of loyalties. Identity is also based upon holy and separated living. They were in the world but not of the world. Many erring groups which call themselves obedient gatherings of Christians fail to be peculiarly distinct in their

dealings with each other or with the unsaved. They do not separate from past ungodly ways. In fact it is not unusual today for many, who profess to be Christian, to make every effort to blur the distinctions to "appeal" to the ungodly, the idolater, and the unclean in soul, spirit and life. Such confusion of distinction away from holiness and righteousness is sin.

Act 2:40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

Act 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Titus 2:14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

2 Corinthians 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

2 Timothy 3-4

It is important for believers, those in the body of Christ, to come out from among the people and ways of the world. It is important for believers to live lives that are separate from sin. It is important for believers to show a distinction of character and life style. To fail to demonstrate such separated living leads to a defiling of the testimony of our Holy God. Such disobedience can only bring disaster into the lives of those who will draw to their credit, divine judgment and/or chastisement. Hebrews

10:31 "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

A church is characterized by its doctrine.

Doctrine is another word for that which is taught. Doctrine is the foundation or system of beliefs which summarize what the Bible teaches. The doctrine is to be pure and faithful to the scriptures. Whether it is formally written or not, every church has its doctrinal foundation. Any church whose doctrine is contrary in letter and/or spirit to the Holy Scriptures is a church that should be avoided.

A church is characterized by organization.

There is one who is pastor/ elder/ bishop. These three adjectives describe one person whose service is described by these words. The pastor/shepherd 1 Peter 2:25 – the shepherd (who leads us to green pastures, protects, and watches over us,) and bishop (overseer of the assemblies) of our souls, who is also the Elder (practices mature living and bears the respect of one who is able to stand at the gates of the city in our behalf). The elder exercises wisdom. He is measured in his judgments, statements, and counsel.

He is given privilege to be free from servile duties in relation to congregations and aided by servants who go by the name of deacons. These men are identified for ministry after there has been prayer and the choosing by the believers of righteous men from among their number, ones who will faithfully fulfill the duties charged to them. They are accountable to God in particular. They are to obey the scriptures with clarity and in simplicity.

Acts 6:4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

The people of the congregation choose out men to serve as deacons, fulfilling needed service and spiritual leadership. Such men as they are chosen out are then appointed and directed by the pastor to commence service. Acts 6:1-7

The people choose out and determine certain things related to the direction and need of the church. We call this congregational government. This action also leads to excluding and reinstating persons who live in unrepentant sin which affects the public testimony of the church.

The people gather funds and resources, especially on the Lord's day for care of their pastor, for the work of the ministry, for the distribution to those who are in special need (who cannot care for themselves) and who are of the number (those especially mentioned are the widows and the fatherless), for sending to the relief of saints in distant places, and for those who minister the gospel in their behalf who go to places away from their local residence.

1 Corinthians 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.

Acts 4:34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

Acts 6 care of the widows... because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

James 1:27 ...To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction

The people regularly meet (not forsaking the assembling of themselves together) for worship, praise, prayer, preaching/teaching (Pastor/teacher), to sing psalms hymns and spiritual songs and to gather together the increase of their resources.

Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

There are to be remembrances of the ordinances of God, baptism and the Lord's table. These are not to be entered into lightly. Each has specific meaning.

Baptism is a symbol of the determination of the candidate to live pure and holy. He is clearly purposed to live as though he is dead to the world and its ways. Baptism tells to the church that this one is clearly identifying with it. Such identity indicates to the world that the individual purposes to be dead to it and its ways. (Romans 6)

The Lord's Table is a periodic gathering of the church to re-affirm allegiance to Christ in all purity. It is a reaffirmation or reminder of the baptismal pledge. It is a feast of remembrance and grateful commemoration of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For those who sully the symbolism or purpose of this ordinance, the Lord has and will chasten such individual.

1Co 10:21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

1Co 10:22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

The consequences could result that one may suffer sickness, and even death. (1 Corinthians 10-11) It is clearly stated that all individuals in the church are to live godly. If they have failed to do so, they need to repent. They need to correct wrong actions and be reconciled with any person they have

offended.

1Co 11:27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

1Co 11:28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

1Co 11:29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

1Co 11:30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

1Co 11:31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

1Co 11:32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

There is an urgency to be pure and live holy lives.

1Peter 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

1Peter 1:16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

What is taught and believed about church is not an option. It is by command and precept. The Bible is the standard. When there are those who teach otherwise, they are to be separated out, even to be anathema. The book of Jude gives clear description of such kinds of people and God's opinion of them. Also much has been written in 2 John, 2 Peter 2-3, Romans 1-3, and many other portions of scriptures.

Anyone who claims to be a Bible teacher or scholar must be one who spends serious time in detailed comparing of scripture with scripture. (2 Timothy 2:15) This means they not only are willing to read it, but that they must be able to research it and outline it

several different ways. They must be ready to study definitions of most words. They must learn to make many cross reference checks and comparisons. They must study the context of the words and verses with relation to the close by and greater passage, chapter, book, and even the whole Bible. They must accept the Bible as absolutely true, reliable, and with greater authority than any other work published.

(Proverbs 30:5, Matthew 4:4, Matthew 5:18, and John 17:17)

Proverbs 30:5 Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

6 Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Matthew 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Matthew 5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

They must be willing to spend time in prayer seeking wisdom from God to make "God Approved" applications and teaching examples. They must also be personally willing to conform their own lives and beliefs to that which they learn from the scriptures without equivocation.

Being a part of a local church over long periods of time has a purifying effect on the individual. Short term allegiances hide a raft of sins and shortcomings. Long term allegiances strip away the façade of presumed righteousness. The real person becomes exposed. The real polishing of the person making them to be gems of beauty takes place

over time and at cost. All persons in a church must be willing to put away the world's customs in dealing with offenses and discipline. They must adopt the Biblical principles such as Matthew 18:15-20 and others. They must learn how to Biblically deal with those who offend their brother or are offended by their brother. We no longer go to law against one another any more.

Colossians 3

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

The over-arching reason we recognize church and we do not abandon the scriptural principle of church arises out of the very truth that we must recognize God as being God. He is supreme. God is above all and over all. He defines what is important and what is not.

Job 4:17 Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?

He declares. He is the standard of right and wrong. He tells us the best way of conducting His testimony and promoting His glory. We are His created beings. We do not tell the Creator what or how. He works all things out for His glory. We are the subjects who either cooperate or are in disobedience. He has declared church as being the agency for this age. He tells us how to do it and when. It is up to us to believe and do. And we are to do it His way.