

II. THE TRUTH

2. Seek the Truth. Read Lk 11:9-13.

This passage comes out of a passage about prayer. At the same time it speaks of making an effort. Evangelical Christians sometimes refer to those, having not yet found Jesus as Lord and savior, as "seekers". For some are seeking the truth.

Most of the lost (and the saved) are seeking something else. The truth is way down the list of priorities. Some people are afraid of the truth. The truth is that they are selfish, irrational and out of control. Some suspect this and so do not want to delve into the truth about themselves any deeper. It is easier to focus on what you want right now.

I would rather hear the truth about being selfish, cold hearted, prideful, fearful, lazy... Once you have all the bad news you have nowhere to go but up. The upside of the truth is that it might reveal why I am here and how best to do it. From an existential perspective, the truth will ultimately make living better.

So if we are ready and hungry for the truth we can find it. Hunger is vital. You have to make an effort. If knowing the truth is just a passing fancy you will not make the effort needed.

To find the truth do two things. First read the Bible. Get some help with this. I would read the gospel of Luke first. After that Acts and perhaps Romans. Then Genesis and Exodus. Many people would say read the gospel of John first. John has much that Jesus said. Luke has what He did and said. Furthermore I think John was aware that the other gospels were out there to be read so he does not repeat what was in them. This means he assumes his readers have read them. As you read ask questions. You can ask God of course but you need to ask in Jesus name and with humility. Jesus, because God has given humanity over to Jesus. We must approach God through Jesus only. Humility, because you must never think God owes you anything. Everything from God is a gift. He may reveal the principles behind what is written directly to you, but most likely His will is that you talk to people known to be following Him. For some asking someone else will be hard. A person used to knowing everything worth knowing is not going to want instruction from someone they look down on. Of course this attitude will be the first thing that has to go.

The second thing to do to find the truth is do everything God tells us to do. Do what He says as well as you understand it and as best you can. I could not begin to count the places in the Bible where God says that he will help those who follow Him. WE must not look back on what we did and think that God sees only that when He looks at us. If we turn on backs on our old way of doing things, He will forget about our old way of doing things. When we turn away from our sin we repent. Read Ezekiel chapter 18 paying close attention to verses 21-23. When you put your feet on His path He will be patient regarding the wrong you do out of ignorance. But if you make no effort to learn His ways it is as if you have chosen to ignore all of them. If you want to begin to do things His way talking to people known to be following Him is vital.

The idea behind all this is that doing things God's way, and turning away from your way, is repentance. Repentance brings you close to God. Jesus said "Repent for the Kingdom of God is near." Read that as "The Kingdom of God is near." "OK. So what do I need to do to get into the Kingdom of God now that it is near?" "Repent! Stop doing things your way. Do them God's way".

You might not be certain that the God that is revealed in the Old and New Testaments is real. All you need do is agree that He might be real. Commit yourself to doing things His way on the chance that He is real. The harder you work at doing things His way and not your old way, the sooner He will reveal Himself to you as being real. It worked for me.

So you might ask, "Why do I have to work so hard to get close to God?" First, because you worked

hard getting away from Him. You pursued what you wanted. You thought as the world thinks. You put your self interest before that of others. You hurt other people getting what you wanted. If you don't think so, ask people you have spent a lot of time with. But don't ask, "Do I" , ask "Have I ever...". Scripture says that all people have sinned. See Isaiah 53:6 and Romans 3:23. Because Scripture says that if we say we have no sin the truth is not in us and we call God a liar. See 1 John 1:10. God says all have sinned, and that includes you, but it doesn't include Jesus.

Secondly, Your sins are a barrier between you and God Jesus had to work hard to remove the barrier of your sins. He left His glory with the Father in heaven, was born a child in a poor family. He lived about 35 years and never sinned even once. He had no wife and no children. He became a homeless wanderer living off the charity of others. He taught whoever would listen. He healed people, drove demons out of people, fed people. He faced the criticism and the persecution of those who disagreed with Him and feared Him. He was innocent, betrayed, arrested, denied, tried, mocked, flogged, crucified and died. This is hard work. I wouldn't have gotten past the years without sinning. More probably I wouldn't go hours without sinning.

3. Have Ears that Hear. See Mt 13:9-17

I used to be quite angry at God. It wasn't His fault. It wasn't totally my fault either. Where I worshiped we were being taught that God is drawing all people to salvation. People close to me were still lost. I was praying for people and they were still lost. How can this be? Who can resist God's will. He made us, therefore He can make us repent.

It may be that God draws some people irresistibly to repentance and Jesus. These people will be saved. It may be that God draws some others but not irresistibly Perhaps God neither draws or repels some people. And perhaps God repels some people but not irresistibly Out of these three groups some of these will be saved and some not. Perhaps some people God repels irresistibly These people will all be lost. How can this be?

In a sense people have had a relationship with God all their lives. Perhaps these five groups of people in fact exist but that people move from one group to another. For a time God draws someone to Himself but after they have refused again and again He stops drawing.

We don't know what has gone on between people and God in the past. I think few people are honest about their relationship with God just as few are honest about their relationship with their spouses. And the more troubled the marriage the less honesty there is.

So where is the proof that God might repelling people He once attracted? See Mt 13:14-15, which is taken from Isaiah 6:9-10. These were the people of God, But they did not want to listen to Him. They started to close their ears to His truth. They started it but He finished it. He closed their ears. And Jesus quotes this passage as the reason why He spoke to the people in parables. We need to have ears that hear or God will close our ears also.

I stopped being angry at God when I stopped accepting what people said about Him, when He had said something different, and began to accept what He said about himself. I see some people that God is not drawing, and I read that God is not drawing all people.

If God loves everyone why would He not draw all people to salvation? But where does it say God loves everyone? It's true God so loved the world that... But read 1 John 4:9. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

The key here is "us" and "we" *might* live. Not so that everyone might live. It doesn't say, "This is how God showed his love among everyone: He sent his one and only Son into the world that everyone might live through him.

God is just. God is perfectly righteous and makes no compromise with evil. He is patient, but He will punish all evil without exception. The only reason that those who belong to Jesus will escape this punishment is because Jesus took the punishment Himself. And those who belong to Jesus are those who turn from doing evil and turn to Jesus for salvation and also turn to Jesus as Lord, turning to obey what He commands. Even those who claim Jesus as savior will not be saved if they continue to do evil. See Lk 6:46-49 and Mt 7:21.

There are people who care only for themselves, people who have no consideration for what is right, only what they can get away with. People God has called several times, but who refuse to go to Him. God loves those who want to do right. God loves those who repent. He reaches out to some and draws them to repentance He doesn't reach out to people who are righteous so much as He reaches out to people who want to be righteous. And nothing makes God rejoice like people who have done wrong, know they have done wrong, are done with wrong doing and are ready to do things God's way. See Lk 15:1-10

When God reaches out to you He will begin to reveal His truth. You must have ears that are waiting to hear it.

4. Pursue Righteousness and the truth will be revealed. Read Jn 7:14-18

I am frequently reminded that Through John the Baptist Jesus had many followers before He appeared publicly. John was sent to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah. He preached "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near" And he offered a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

The people knew they were sinners. They did not know what to do about it. John gave them a way to take an affirmative step toward God. And they did. Even the tax collectors and prostitutes went to John. In John they sensed a way back to God. I'm guessing that they might not have been able to explain how they knew that John was from God. It was said, "John never worked a miracle..." It was the Spirit of God calling them. For the people who really wanted to be right with God, John appeared as the way.

John for his part identified Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This is what the people wanted. A way for their sin to be taken away, both the tendency to sin and the punishment for it. What John said Jesus had to offer was very attractive to them.

See Jn 10:1-5. The people of God recognize His voice. People who are trying to be righteous can sense at a deep level, perhaps in a way they can not explain, that something rings true when they hear something from God. When someone comes from God these people know this person is from God even if they can't explain it.

What is happening is that for people who are trying to do what is right, who are opening themselves up to God, the Spirit of God is drawing them. And so Jesus says NIV John 7:17 "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own."

If you are open minded and wanting to do what is right, trying to do what is right, trusting that God is right, wanting God to help you be righteous, being humble and claiming no righteousness of your own; God's Spirit in you will tell you that Jesus words are the truth from God. You will sense that God is in His words, and then you can begin to believe that Jesus is the way the truth and the life and that we need to obey everything He commanded.

5. Drink if you are thirsty. Receive the light of the world Receive the living water and the eternal life. Worship in spirit and in truth. Read Jn 7:37-39, Jn 8:12 and Jn 4:1-42.

Jesus uses many terms and phrases in John's gospel to describe, and as metaphors for, salvation. A person might not understand one term or metaphor but perhaps they will understand another. It is a shotgun approach to teaching. Something is bound to connect with you.

Life, eternal life, everlasting life, living water, bread of life, light of life: these are not necessarily interchangeable terms as Jesus used them, but they have one thing in common, that being "Life". Life is everything we have. Eternal life, or everlasting life, is life that can not be over powered by death. In an arid land culture water sustains life hence "living water". Amongst the poor bread sustains life. "Bread of life" is superlative bread that gives super sustenance "Born again" is life reborn. "Born of water" means being born of the thing that sustains life in arid places.

In a time when there was no electricity or street lighting at night it was dark. People knew what it was to be lost in the darkness and unable to find their way, even in their own homes. So the "light of life", or the "light" would be the thing that guides us through our lives. Then again Sheol was the pit and the grave. The grave is the place to where all the living are traveling. The grave is dark, especially after they put the dirt over you. The "light" lightens everything where ever it is, even the grave. The "light" overcomes death.

Most rich people were rich because they were the son of a rich man. The king was king because he was the son of the king. It was a special thing to be the son of someone special. This is true in our culture, but in that culture self made men were more rare and so many people were born into slavery. Being the son of someone special was ever so much better than being the slave of someone. The "right to become children of God" was therefore an awesome concept.

In a time when there were no signs, except on the Roman roads, to know the way to a place was useful. One did not have to waste time being lost or misdirected. So having or knowing the "way" to live, or the "way" through life was awesome

In our culture many of us appreciate the difference between clean and dirty to the extent that we are miserable until we have our morning shower. But the Jews had the laws of ceremonial uncleanness You were not to touch unclean things. They would make you unclean. Sin made you unclean. The demons were unclean. The things of God were clean. To be "clean" was to washed from all sin and uncleanness "Sanctified" is similar. Sanctified is a Latin word we would translate as "made holy". To ancient Israel "holy" meant "set apart for God." Some things were ordinary and could be used for any ordinary purpose. Holy things were special and were set aside to be used only for a holy purpose. If you were "sanctified" or "made holy" you were special and set aside to be used for a special purpose related to God and not to be used for an ordinary purpose. God has plans for you. God is big so His plans are big plans.

In all times people tell lies to accomplish their ends. To know the truth about some things even if not all things is very important. When you know the truth you can't be mislead. You can make good decisions. If you knew the truth you knew who to trust. You knew what to do. Truth is knowledge and knowledge is power.

"Grace" is undeserved favor. To receive God's grace was to receive more from God than you deserved. Once God starts to give you more than you deserve the sky is the limit.

The "Spirit" is the Spirit of God. They did not know much about the Spirit of God. But they knew it was God's Spirit in the prophets that empowered them to prophesy.

"Saved" means so much to us. "Saved" meant being saved from being lost. Lost meant lost never to be recovered. Like losing a loved one. You never get them back.

All these metaphors Jesus used to describe that we call salvation (in Jesus). But, where are the commands in this. *Through Jesus we can and we should and we are commanded to:* have life, have eternal life, have everlasting life, drink living water, eat the bread of life, have the light of life shine upon us and in us, have the light that guides us , be born again, be born of water, receive the right to become children of God, get on the way, be made clean, be made holy, know the truth, receive God's

grace, receive the Spirit of God, be saved.

Jesus said we need not and should not and are commanded not to: embrace death or the darkness, remain slaves, fall off the way, stay unclean, be just ordinary, embrace the lie, miss out on God's grace, be lost.

6. Don't make excuses for not seeking God. Read Lk 14:15-24.

As with any parable the best thing to do is to assign roles to the symbols in the parable. Sometimes this is tricky and becomes a trial and error process. The "certain man" is God. The banquet is the kingdom of heaven. The guests are the people of God. In Jesus day they would be the Jews. In our day it would be the Christians. The servant could be a prophet or other messenger from God. It is probably not Jesus because His role is much greater than that of messenger. The excuses the invited people give are excuses. For one it is the purchase of a field. For another it is the purchase of oxen. For another it is a marriage. Interestingly, in the Law if a man was newly married he was excused from military service.

The point of this is that these things are not logical excuses to missing a banquet. The field, oxen and wife will still be there when the banquet is over. Hence, the man is angry.

What excuses do people give these days for not pursuing the Kingdom of God: "There is no God, God does not love me, where was God when I needed His help, After I get my degree, after I establish my career, after I get married, after I have a family, after I make my fortune, when I am feeling better, when I am no longer ill, After I build my house, after I retire, After my spouse comes back, after my child comes home, after I've had my fun." People don't come out and say these things unless you press them, but sometimes the clues are all there.

My favorite and easily the most popular is "There is no God." About these people I say, "There is no logic." It is impossible to prove beyond any doubt the existence or nonexistence of God, generally. When He is in your face you will consider it proved that He exists. It would be more honest for people to say, "There is no evidence of God that I can see and understand to the extent that it is probable that He exists."

Sometimes I come across the opening to an ant's nest on the sidewalk. The ants do not seem to react to my presence. I wonder if they know I exist. I wonder if they know I am there. Now suppose I don't want them to know that I exist. Could I avoid using the walk? Could I stay out of sight? Could I be quiet? Could I stay down wind? As a man some things are easier than others, but for the omnipotent God all things are easy. I conclude that if God wants to hide His existence from people it is easy for Him to do it. God could look into your mind and calculate just what experiences you would need in life to be generally convinced He is not there. Then He could bring those events to pass, and there you are convinced He's not there.

But, why would God do such a thing? It doesn't matter. The point is that He could. Once you accept that God could be hiding from you, logically you must abandon "God does not exist." for "Why might God hide His existence from me?"

Put it another way. Most people used to think the Earth is flat. For most people there was little evidence that it was not flat. If it were not flat how could the water stay in the oceans? A few sailors or fewer astronomers might have evidence for a round Earth, but they could be considered nuts and the majority could go on thinking the Earth is flat. What personal indisputable evidence do you have that the Earth is round?

The Earth has made no effort to hide the fact that it is round, yet most people believed it was flat. How much easier for God to hide the fact that He exists. Honest logical people should think along these lines: "I don't perceive evidence that God exists. If God exists it would probably be a very important

fact. If God exists I should be doing things differently so as to profit from that fact. I should make an effort to discover that God exists."

However logical and honest people are rare. I think it was Diogenes who was looking for an honest man. I think he never found one. I wonder what he would have thought of Jesus.

I think "God does not exist." is just a cover for "God does not do what I want." So we use dishonesty to cover up our illogic.

Don't miss your chance to have a good relationship with God because of meaningless excuses. You don't hurt Him a bit by ignoring Him, but you will do yourself great harm by not seeking Him. My fear is that the vast majority of people think, when they think, they will get even with God by ignoring Him. But, most the time they just think about something else. Deep down inside they know they should be working harder to connect with God, but it takes an effort.

Some people say "Go with the flow." Jesus told us where the flow goes. "Broad and easy is the road that leads to destruction, and many take it."

7. Seeking the truth means rejecting the untruth. Read Mk 8:13-21, Mt 16:5-12, Lk 21:8, Mk 13:1-6

Does Jesus expect us to think?

Apparently yes according this passage. While we are at it. He expects us to listen, to obey, to make every effort, to pick up our cross and follow Him, to love our neighbor, to have faith, to watch, to pray and never give up, to believe without seeing, to forgive, to walk as Jesus did. He asks a lot of us. When we say "forgive us" we are asking a lot of him.

But some of us are brighter than others. Even so, I know a man who can not read and yet he knows some spiritual truths that many perhaps most Christians do not know. How can this be? He wanted to know. God wanted him to know. By some means God presented these truths to him and he accepted them as truth. On these truths God can teach him more and deeper truths.

It makes sense that God will have all of us figure out what we can and then teach us the rest

How do we know what is true?

How do we know who to listen to?

Jesus said He was the truth. His words must be true. Words that align with Jesus words might be true. Words that contradict Jesus words must be false. Those who say things that contradict Jesus words are unreliable. Those who affirm Jesus words and never contradict them in word or deed are reliable.

8. Don't Think as Men think but as God Thinks. Read Mt 16:13-28, Mk 8:13-21, Lk 9:18-26

Peter was thinking as men think. This was his plan: Jesus would continue doing miracles and continue to grow in popularity. Eventually the people would make Him the national leader. Peter would get a high position in the new government. All this can't happen if Jesus dies.

God's plan was that Jesus would die taking the punishment for our sins so that the guilt of our sins would no longer come between us and God. Then He would send His Holy Spirit to dwell in the hearts of His people. The people can then be close to God forever.

Clearly these plans were mutually exclusive. Our plans and Gods plans are usually mutually exclusive also, unless we begin to think as He thinks.

I think there is a significant difference between being shrewd about human nature while building the kingdom of God on the one hand and building the kingdom on the principles of human nature only. Using human principles we can remove some of the obstacles that keep people from God. Having a

church bus, a large parking lot, and scheduling the various church activities at convenient times will make it easier for people to attend them. But you can't make people believe. I have heard so many people say, "I wish I could but I just don't believe in this." Remember that it was the people who had faith in Jesus enough to roll away the stone. But, it was Jesus who raised Lazarus back to life. We need to pray for people that God may begin to draw them. We need to show them a life of faith in Jesus so they can see to what it is that God is drawing them. Comfortable pews, great sound systems, and spotless rest rooms will never create a hunger to know God. A suffering person of faith who God is clearly holding up through hard times will make people think and even say, "I wish I had what she has!"

Some churches don't see the hypocrisy in asking the believers to step out in faith and tithe. Even as the church does itself does not seriously consider giving 10% of its income to missions.

Using human principles it makes sense for people to cohabit before they get married. They want to see if the relationship will work. In contrast the spiritual principle is that we do what God says and as we move closer to Him we move closer to each other.

It is a human principle to figure out how to get what you want. It is a spiritual principle to change your wants.

It is a human principle to look out for your own interests. It is a spiritual principle to invest yourself in other people and find that your old self interests are so important and they are not your new self interests.

It is a human principle to do what God commands when it makes sense to us. It is a spiritual principle to do what God commands all the time.

Satan does not need us to think as he thinks to fulfill his plans for us. All he has to do is keep us from thinking as God thinks. Satan will have us look out for number one, seek knowledge rather than faith, build power and control rather than trust. Satan wants us to join him in the lake of fire. If we want to see as many people as possible end up there. Then we think the way he thinks.

9. How to Identify the False Prophets. Read Mt 7:15-20, Mt 24:23-27, Mk 13:21-23

Why identify the false prophets? Because they are ferocious wolves! What is this? Many perhaps most or nearly all can not pass up the temptation to obtain power given the opportunity. How much pleasure would it be if a few dozen people took you to be their spiritual leader and believe that everything you say is true. Assume that some are bright, some hard working, some wealthy, some influential in the society at large. Assume some are good looking. If in affect they become your slaves because you can eventually talk them into anything and you will lack for nothing. This would be tempting.

There are people who are such astute students of human nature that they can gain power over some people, or at least great influence. I call it charisma. Most people do not exercise this power maliciously. They use it to their advantage. They don't need to be able to influence greatly or control every person or even most people. They just need to control some people, enough to justify the effort. I assume that people like this generally end up in management, sales or politics, where understanding people is really important.

The problem is when people like this get into religion and claim to have received revelations with the authority of God. They claim to be prophets. Read 2 Corinthians ch 11 & 12, Colossians Ch 2, 1 Timothy ch 1 & 6:3-5 20-21, 2 Timothy 3:1-9, 2 Peter ch 2, 1 John 2:18-29 & 4:1=6, 2 John 7-11, 3 John 9-11, Jude, Revelation 2:2, 14-15, 20-24. Why was so much written about this? Because it was a big problem and still is. Remember Jim Jones and David Koresh? It was their followers who died.

10. Make a right judgment. Read Jn 7:23-24.

Understanding what keeps us from making a right judgment is crucial to understanding how to make one. The arguments, regarding the truth, Jesus had with the Pharisees, teachers of the law, Sadducees, whoever, don't seem altogether unlike arguments between Christians. What becomes apparent about those arguments are four things: first people in error over emphasize some scriptures and ignore others, second they are prideful and so not teachable, third people tend to "parrot" what they have been taught, and fourth they have no faith that God will reveal the truth.

The problem of over emphasizing some scriptures while ignoring others is largely a problem of denominations that must of course become a problem of the leadership, pastors and laity. The Pharisees over emphasized "Do no work on the Sabbath." and ignored "Love your neighbor..." In my opinion: there is a denomination that over emphasizes "I give you the keys of the kingdom", and ignores "scripture can not be denied". In my opinion: there is a denomination that over emphasizes "...neither do I condemn you." and ignores "...friendship with the world is hatred towards God...". In my opinion: there is a denomination that over emphasizes "...by grace you have been saved, through faith..." and ignores "...be holy in all you do...". In my opinion: there is a denomination that over emphasizes "...not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." and ignores "Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him." In my opinion: there is a denomination that over emphasizes "Who will separate us from the love of Christ?" and ignores "You need to persevere so that... you will receive what He has promised." I don't know what I over emphasize, you decide. I wish I had more "Love your neighbor as yourself."

How does this happen? We can't help it we all to a greater or lesser extent create in our minds a model of how everything works. Think of it as putting together a puzzle. The pieces represent facts and the completed picture a comprehensive understanding of the subject. At a very young age we conclude that objects don't just disappear they must be somewhere (when we are middle aged and

have a house full of junk and can't find many things we wonder if this is really so). That fact, known as object permanence, is like a piece to a puzzle that is a picture of reality. As we age we build mental models of how people think, some people at least, how the government works, how the industry in which we are employed works etc. As we grow in Christian maturity we construct a model of God and of how Christianity works.

Where there is no model at all there is little understanding. This results in the "parroting" of arguments our teachers taught us, but without our actually understanding them. Teachers who teach facts but do not help the students to understand how the facts fit together, really should not be teaching adults. At age nine we accept facts as facts and that's that.

Why must there be understanding? Because we can't properly apply the facts to a real world issue until we understand them. Therefore we can't apply scriptural truth to our lives if we do not have the understanding of the principles revealed by the scriptures. I am reminded of high school physics. You learn a number of equations. It is much easier to memorize the equations than to use them. Because without understanding we don't know which equation to use.

I think the way these models are expanded is this: when we have a new fact regarding reality we add it to the model in such a way that it does not contradict the model as it already exists. Powerful facts may cause us to reconstruct the model somewhat so as to accommodate them. When a new fact seems to confirm and explain other facts already incorporated into the model it reinforces the validity of the whole group. In life the importance or the centrality of certain facts in our lives determines the emphasis they require. A fact that has been shown repeatedly to be true and with great effect will override a fact known to have exceptions or to be of less vital importance. This is the source of the over emphasis problem. What fits in the model is subject to over emphasis. What does not fit is ignored.

The problems with this mental model building when we develop a picture of Christianity are these: The

sources of the facts do not have the authority in God's eyes that they do in ours. The impact of the facts on our immediate lives causes them to have an undue importance when compared to facts that apply in the next life. Of two contradicting facts having the same authority and impact we will believe the one that fits into our model easiest. Of two facts, one having the most immediate positive impact but the other having slightly greater authority we will accept into our model the former and discard the latter. Facts that do not fit our model are not put in standby but are thrown away. And even though we might recognize that all the proceeding are problems we know that reconstructing our model to accommodate new truth takes a lot of effort and causes great insecurity until it is completed. Furthermore the reconstructed model may require that we reconstruct our lives. This is a great material or relational disincentive to begin the effort. We may also have to admit that certain

arguments or people who we publicly disagreed with in the past are now found to be right. This invokes our pride as well, and this is where pride is another and great obstacle to learning the truth.

These problems of this mental model building of Christianity have an ill effect on our relationship to God and His truth. The problem is this: God says to us regarding something, "This is true". But, because of one or more of the problems above we say, "No it isn't" or at least live our lives as if we say "No. It isn't". Contradicting God has a negative impact on our relationship with Him. Duh!

This mental model building of Christianity has a great impact on how teachable we are. The stronger the model the better able we are to apply what we know to issues we encounter. The weaker the model the more easily we can be taught, and the more teachable we are. But how can we have the advantages of both a strong and weak model? The answer lies with the facts that don't fit in. Rather than throw them out, that is ignore them, we need to put them on standby.

A good man I never met but heard quoted at times was Prof. McGill at Roberts Wesleyan College in North Chili NY. He is purported as saying or saying in effect, "That's one for the mystery bag." The mystery bag is where scriptures that seem to contradict other scriptures have to go. Our hope is that there are no real contradictions in the scriptures there are only seeming contradictions. But rather than throw out the odd contradicting scripture we put it in the mystery bag. We pray about it, and keep our eyes and ears open. Because we hope that someday soon God will explain it to us.

God wants us to know the truth. Perhaps more basic truth must be learned first. Perhaps we must decide that we really want to know. If we stop to think of it: it must be easier for God to teach us the truth and give us understanding than to create the heavens and the Earth.

We need to move past "Who can understand God" and ask ourselves, "Does God want me to understand Him?" Do you want your friends, spouse, or children to understand you? If they do understand us and love us they must love us indeed. If they don't understand us and we know it, we wonder whether they really love us or just their conception of us. If God truly wants us to love Him with all we have, would He not then want us to understand Him so that we can love Him and not just love our conception of Him. We need to have faith that God can reveal and desires to reveal the truth about Himself to us sufficient for us to love Him. So it all comes down to, "Do I really want to understand God? And, not so that I can get what I want from Him but so that I can truly love Him"