

"I used to be a  
Bible teacher."

## TC's Thoughts for Discussion

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Why do Atheists believe what they believe about the Bible and Christianity? Why do Muslims believe what they believe about the Bible and Christianity? Why do Buddhists and Hindus and Jews believe what they believe about the Bible and Christianity? Catholics and Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons—Why do they believe what they believe about the Bible and Christianity? Why do Pentecostals and Baptists and Methodists and Presbyterians and Lutherans and Episcopalians believe what they believe about the Bible and Christianity? Why do you believe what you believe about the Bible and Christianity? Do you teach others?

Quick! How many different children's party games can you recall? Ever play the one called "Gossip?" If so, the following description of it will amuse you all over again. If you are not yet familiar with it you may catch up on loads of fun and gain some valuable human nature insight, to boot. Read on for a brief description of the fascinating children's party game called "Gossip."

With the children lined up single-file, an adult leader explains the game's simple rules and its two objectives. She might say, "The important thing is (A) to listen very carefully, so that you'll be able (B) to whisper the message, accurately, to the next person in line. Then, from the last player in line, we'll learn how well you've all listened and how accurately you've delivered the original message, as a team." After reading a short written message, the first player gives it back to the game leader and the game begins.

More players mean longer games. Longer games always yield hilarious distortions of the original messages. Please remember that—and this, too: Throughout most of the 2,000 years since Jesus walked here, literacy was the exception. Today, literacy is the norm. Still, though, the uninformed trust their preachers for interpretation of scripture, as if they can't read with understanding. The people they trust with all their hearts, their preachers, trust denominational theologians, "experts." The theologians of each denomination hold one another accountable to their respectively franchised "what 'we' believe" platforms. What could have possibly gone wrong with that scenario over a period of 2,000 years? Suffice it to say that Lucifer is ecstatic. The gates of Hell have observably prevailed against the visible church.

You may know that there are shocking contrasts in the interpretation of critical scriptures even among mainstream denominations. Seems our professionals, the religious elite, have been playing multiple separate games of "Gossip" for 2,000 years. Those long games have predictably distorted God's original message, even in our mainstream denominations. That's no surprise, of course, but there's great news: We still have God's original message—in writing! Shouldn't we throw out all the new stuff? Some of it is hilarious. It's true! The Gospel message has "evolved!"

> "Today's new time religions masquerade, successfully, as old time religion." —*yours truly*

Our religious teachers often seek to bedazzle us. Assertively, they utter things like, "What this scripture means is..." And when they wish to project exceptional spiritual credibility they say things like, "God showed me that this scripture means..." Uninformed believers nod faithfully in blind agreement.

Often, when a discerning parishioner questions an interpretation of Scripture, a self-serving teacher will respond cleverly (like a politician) with something like, "In matters like this, dear sister, you just have to have faith."

That's an awful lot of faith to invest in other human beings; don't you think? To invest that much **Faith Equity**<sup>SM</sup> in God and his sensibly interpreted written word would be the smart thing to do. But these are those last days, when people will not endure sound doctrine. Popular doctrines somehow feel more spiritual...and they're more comfortable and convenient, too, you know. It's just that human nature (i.e.: the Sin nature) is like water; consistently and predictably it follows the course of least resistance. That profound insight prompted the apostle, Paul, to write his bombshell messages about using our minds – instead of our hearts – when it comes to rightly dividing of the word of truth:

> "Change the way you think!" —Paul, at Romans 12:2, sensibly paraphrased

> "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." —Paul, at Philippians 2:5

I was a successful Bible teacher for a LOT of years—big sanctuary classes.

I knew what my denomination believed and that's what I taught.

Yes, I should've checked it out to make sure it was true.

So why didn't I do that? Well, maybe I didn't do that for the same reason that you haven't really checked out what your denomination teaches. "In religion and politics, people's beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at second hand, and without examination." —Mark Twain



- > "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." —Paul, at 1 Thessalonians 5:21
- > "God has given us the spirit of a sound mind." —Paul, at 2 Timothy 1:7, sensibly paraphrased

The prophet, Jeremiah, was even acquainted with the folly of thinking with one's feelings:

- > "The heart [is] deceitful above all [things], and desperately wicked: who can know it?" —Jeremiah 17:9

You can do this! Your own literacy and intellect can get you the original truth. The written message of truth is actually rather simple and easy to understand—for those who will learn to study God's written word as-if-no-one-had-ever-explained-what-it-means. Those who would have you believe it is too complex and difficult to understand seek to preserve their own employment / income security. For multiple centuries, members of the clergy were delighted that parishioners couldn't read.

The lofty, intellectual, Pharisee-like theology and all that "deeper meaning" stuff can surely wait long enough for us to put an end to the 2,000-year games of Bible "Gossip." We can do that by getting the very basic critical stuff straight, first. (One of my favorite quotes is from Vince Lombardi: "Gentlemen, this is a football.")

There are critical differences between sincere Believers and fruitful Disciples. The visible church has done a respectable job of making Believers...

Many, including clergy, may not consciously know why they believe whatever they believe about the Bible and Christianity. It is likely that most have passively subordinated their personal understanding to one of the theologically elite societies, each of whom claims a divine monopoly on scriptural interpretation. Observably, many of the uninformed have simply defaulted to the doctrine to which they were respectively first introduced; e.g.: "Momma was a saint! Her religion's gott'a be the right religion!" Sad.

In 2006, I organized a group of multi-denominational friends for some serious Bible study. Jointly and severally, we have been prompted to reexamine our own respective beliefs on several important Bible topics. In the process of following through on that objective, we have gained compassion for others who will feel compelled to embark on their own active (as opposed to passive) searches for original truth. Might that include you?

Each must acquire truth, for himself. Active searching for truth is effective. Passive searching is more comfortable, but it can only yield confirmation of denominational dogma. While denominational theologies may feature elements of Bible truth, their foundations are typically constructed of collections of derivative works. This series can help you learn WHY and HOW to search effectively and efficiently for God's original truth.

You are literate. You are intelligent. You have no rational reason to think the religious elite have a greater ability to interpret the really important parts of God's word for you. Yes, many of them have studied for "deeper meaning" and we should honor and respect them for that. But, if they are fellow servants of God they will be delighted to learn that you have decided to begin a new study of critical scripture, this time as-if-no-one-had-ever-explained-what-it-means.

My Bible study colleagues and I have discovered that much of what we had respectively been taught in our various church experiences is simply not true. Some of it is dangerous. Our teachers were educated and sincere, just like yours. So were their teachers...and their teachers ...and their teachers! We were disappointed to learn that they all gained most of their understanding from others. Those you trust, who do they trust?

"Gossip." Gotta stop that game. But don't make up your mind about any of this until you've done what those more-noble Bereans did, at Acts 17:11.

—T. C. Newsome 

PS: Post a comment or question or just read what others are saying: [www.DYPK.org/apps/blog](http://www.DYPK.org/apps/blog).

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