

**Lest We Drift Away**  
How we read the Scriptures  
by Hendrik Joubert

Even those who claim to receive messages directly from God will say that they follow the Bible only. Like many others they will do so until they are presented with a simple passage of Scripture that proves otherwise. The attempts to justify their practices often are predictable. The first may be to suggest that the statement should be read “in context.” More often than not this is not an invitation to examine the text, but rather a declaration that the conversation is over.

The laws of interpretation may be discussed next, but using the fancy term *hermeneutics*, in order to sound *scholarly*. ***And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God...And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup> that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*** (1Corinthians 2:1, 4-5)

Certainly one is to ***Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*** (2Timothy 2:15) The apostle tells the Ephesians ***...by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, <sup>4</sup> by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), <sup>5</sup> which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: (Ephesians 3:3-5)*** Later the apostle writes: ***Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Ephesians 5:17)*** The first chapter of the letter to the Corinthians demonstrates what role education (other than the ability to read) plays in our ability to understand the will of God.

Some may proceed to analyze the words and phrases in order to arrive at a different conclusion. Again, things are not as they seem. The Greek is discussed by many who had no formal training, thereby basing their conclusions upon what a “scholar” says, while yet another “scholar” may be quoted to demonstrate the opposite. Belief is based upon the testimony of “scholars” and their credentials, rather than upon the simple text as it has already been translated by a *group* of “scholars.” If ***anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, <sup>4</sup> he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions,...*** (1Timothy 6:3-4)

Then there are the patronizing remarks such as “surely you are not suggesting” or “do you mean to tell me?” The suggestion is that what we are saying may be without foundation, or even ridiculous. We should invite them to illustrate from the Scriptures why our faith is without foundation. No position should be considered too ridiculous to warrant an answer. Not all who question our actions and our teachings are insincere and prejudice. Everyone has the right to ask for an explanation. In a loving and caring way we should give the reasons why we consider their views outlandish – if we are able to. ***But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;...*** (1Peter 3:15)

Over the years I have had a number of discussions with Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons, each time treating the situation as an opportunity to help them see the truth contained in the Scriptures. A friend taught me a basic question to ask when the representatives of these churches want to end the discussion. “You are looking for open minded and sincere people who are interested in learning the truth, are you not?” Inevitably the answer is a firm “Yes!” “Why then will you not demonstrate the same attitude so we may engage in a discussion of the Scriptures to establish the will of God?”

It is easy to see the apparent insincerity and lack of respect for the word of God in others, however how clear is our vision as we keep our eyes on the marker to keep from drifting. Once the drifting has started, working back to the marker becomes an effort. We should continually visit some of our convictions to ensure that we are not *condemning ourselves in what we approve*, to use a phrase in **Romans 14:22**.

Those in Thessalonica were considered **noble-minded** for checking the Scriptures even when the apostles preached. (**Acts 17:11**) Why would we feel insulted when what we preach is examined in the light of the Scriptures?

***Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. (1Corinthians 4:6)*** My faith should be founded upon that which God revealed through His word, and not in the oratory of a scholarly brother. ***So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)***