

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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"I Want To Do Better"

By Steve Niemeier

Matthew records the events of the exchange between Jesus and the rich young ruler in chapter 19 and verses 16 through 22. When reading this one with an honest heart cannot but think of how they have been in the same position as that young man. How many times when things are going well do we think we are doing a good job in our work for the Lord? Yet, if we would just stop and ask that question "What do I still lack?" and answer it honestly from God's word we would probably feel as sorrowful as that young ruler did.

Some of the areas that we may need to improve but fail to take action on are:

1) Placing spiritual things above the physical things of this life – John 6:26 – it seems we only want out of Jesus what we want to satisfy our physical appetites

– not the true value that He offers us.

2) Discerning right from wrong – Philippians 1:9-11 – sometimes we justify our actions even though we know better (James 4:17)

3) Applying the Truth in my life – Matthew 10:16 – first I must know the Truth and then use the wisdom to apply in my life so I will avoid yielding to temptation.

4) Relying on God's promises – Romans 8:28; Philippians 4:13 – while many times we say that we trust God – do we live like we do?

5) Desiring to teach God's word – II Timothy 2:2; James 3:1; 4:12 – yes one can participate in studies on how to teach – put the plan of a lesson in their Bibles – but if they lack the desire then all they have done is write things down!

6) Really believing in the finality of God's word – Luke 16:27-31 – and so it is that many of us go through life not considering that the end is coming – we fail to realize that we are on God's time

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and not our own time – there will be a time when it will be too late to wake up to the finality of the words God has given us.

7) The true answer of whether I am really a doer or just a hearer of God's word – James 1:25 – yes, we go to some or all of the services offered – yes we might send a card or two – yes we might even encourage people with uplifting phrases – but are we really a doer of His word? Do we really sacrifice for Him? Do we realize that faith must have works and vice versa?

Yes, we can look at the rich young ruler and shake our heads at how we would not give up his possessions to follow the Lord – yet when the questions come to us about our service – about our faith – about our works things are different. Sometimes it seems that we expect God to make a special exception for us – yet He is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34)!

**The great challenge of
life is to learn what's
important and disregard
the rest.**

**What Can be Known
Can be Shown**

By Tim Nichols

All rational students of the Bible want to be told, by teachers and preachers, not just what to believe, but also why those things are to be believed. Every faithful teacher of the Bible is prepared to deliver both in clear terms. Bible doctrines are all taught by specific Bible passages and the connections between them can be described in terms that the average man can understand.

Those who have devoted the time and effort necessary to mine truth from the gold mine that we call the Bible are able to clearly trace the path to the treasure-trove for others to follow. The Bible is not a mystical book that can only be understood by the scholarly few who can then only pass along the correct conclusions without expressing the reasons for those conclusions. Instead it is a living book whose meaning is available to all who will seek wisdom (Prov. 9:1-6). The true Biblical scholar is one who has truly discovered truth and who is willing and able to show that truth, and its source, to others.

This is why the pseudo-scholars of the first century stumbled over the simplicity of the gospel (1 Cor. 1:18-24). They demanded to hear what was "profound", "wise", "deep", and

"intellectual" according to human standards and they were irritated with the "foolishness" of the simple gospel of Christ. To them, the gospel was shallow and they wanted what they perceived to be deep. When some with this mindset were "converted" they attempted to distance themselves from the simplistic, shallow teaching of the apostles and to elevate themselves as the truly wise and sophisticated in the early church. Paul's inspired sarcasm was designed to warn them and not to shame them (**1 Cor. 4:9-14**).

Pseudo-scholars exist among us today. The simplicity of the gospel is not enough for them. They are not content to simply learn what the Book of God says and to remain with it. They are constantly searching for something new and profound that will show others how wise they are. When questioned about the book, chapter, and verse of their novel "discoveries" they are not able to locate them specifically because they are often several steps away from what the scriptures actually teach and separated from the Word of Truth by the great gulf of pure human speculation. Even so, they are seldom at a loss for words when questioned. Their answers emphasize their own wisdom in

some way and suggest that their conclusions ought to be accepted because of the greatness of the miner who brought them forth. But they cannot point the way to the mother-lode.

One such brother argued, in my hearing, that we should accept his conclusion because he had spent several months studying the matter under consideration in the great library at Harvard University. A "televangelist" suggested recently that his doctrine was true because he had spent years with the subject constantly in his mind. Others are heard to affirm that their conclusions are to be accepted because of the number of hours they spent studying the subject, or because of the degrees that they hold, or because of their own ability to see what is not clearly taught. But they cannot produce a "thus saith the Lord". Such is just too shallow for the "wise".

The true Bible student who attempts to teach his subject to others is delighted to have questions concerning the source of all that he teaches. He takes those things in the Bible that may appear complicated at first and explains them in terms that a child could understand without the first thought of whether he is or is not perceived by his hearers as "wise" or "profound". And he is not intimidated, in the least, by those among his hearers who call his work "shallow".

Pearl S. Buck, in her novel, *Pavilion of Women*, placed the following words in the mind of Madam Wu as she was being instructed by "Brother Andre": Now, his manner of answering questions was exceedingly simple, but this was because he was so learned. He did not need, as lesser men do, to talk over and above the pith of the matter. Instead, he knew how...to put into a handful of words the essence of the essence of truth. He stripped the leaves away, and he plucked the fruit and cracked the husk and peeled the inner shell and split the flesh and took out the seed and divided it, and there was the kernel, pure and clean (p. 174).

This is a good picture of a true scholar. He has knowledge to share but no need to prove that he is noteworthy. His delight is in helping others to find what he has found. His goal is to know truth and to point the way to it without seeking recognition for his own abilities. He knows that what can be known can be shown and that the feigned knowledge of pseudo-scholars is fool's gold. Any map showing the source of such spurious teaching would have to trace a path to the mind of some proud pretender who desires to be recognized as a great teacher, who does not understand what he is saying or what he is affirming (**1 Tim. 1:7**).

So be diligent in questioning what you do not understand from any teacher of the word. Anyone who has found the truth can show you its source. Others will point in obscure directions or simply become angry with the questioner.