

Dealing With Deception - Part 1

by Winkie Pratney

Winkie Pratney discusses the importance of discernment in recognizing deception and the underlying reasons why individuals may fall into false beliefs.

Duration: 53:21

Scripture: Psalm 119:130, Proverbs 3:5, John 14:15, 1 Corinthians 2:14

Topics: "Spiritual Discernment", "Gods Truth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of discerning deception and staying rooted in God's truth. It highlights the need to focus on God's revelation, practical obedience, and illumination rather than relying solely on intellectual analysis. The speaker shares insights on recognizing deception through a transformed spirit and attitude, trusting in God's testimony, and holding out Christ rather than engaging in philosophical debates.

Transcript

When I was asking the Lord about what I should talk about on this, the first of our table talk sort of sessions, I couldn't get away from this. I believe that as we approach the end of this particular decade, we're going to have more weird things happen in the next 20 years than have happened before. We'll have some very strange things happen.

One of the key things the church is going to have to learn to do is to discern why things get weird. This will deal with a number of areas that actually expose how the devil works. I don't like announcing this early because then nobody shows up because they all get into car crashes and everything else.

So I thought this is absolute sign to me this is what is supposed to happen tonight. So the tract we did on this many years ago, my board in New Zealand asked me, could you do a tract or something on cults? Now, I'll tell you why I don't like doing that because I remember many years ago in England speaking in a home meeting with about probably 40 people and they were the most miserable looking people I think I've ever talked to as a small audience, miserable. And I said, well, what is wrong with these people? I didn't say it loudly because they were so miserable they would have killed me.

But what is wrong with these people? I said, how long have they been doing Bible? Oh, they said, they've been almost a year doing Bible. I said, what are they studying? They said the cults. And I thought, well, no wonder.

If you're feeding every week on what is wrong, then that's going to come out in your life and in your mind and everything else. So I'd much rather focus on what the Treasury Department is supposed to do when it tests for counterfeits. You don't see a counterfeit for, I understand, a month or more.

They make you study real bills. They show you the paper that's done or the plastic that's printed on and then they show you all the different little watermarks and things. And they make you so familiar with the real that when they throw some fake ones in, you can pick it.

So I'd much rather look at the originals and even deeper than that, how do you get away from the original and get into the fake? So this is not strictly about just studying why kids get into cults. It's a much broader field. It is why do people get deceived religiously? And I believe as we go further on in the Lord, he's going to do more powerful things to get our attention.

We're a pretty boring culture without absolutes, a culture like ours, postmodern culture with no real rights and real wrongs. You could easily drive a truck through that culture in terms of bringing some form of deception to it. So what I want to do in these two sessions we do, I want to give you some real simple keys to finding out why something is going wrong.

And I believe this will apply not just to weird groups that appear. Long before a group goes weird, it will have these problems. So the board asked me, could you do a tract on the cults? Now you've got a choice.

You could do like Walter Martin did, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, but then you have to have an encyclopedia. And if you live in California, you have to add another book every week because there's so many weird things that crop up and each one's got its own little twist. So you could do, you know, they believe this and the Bible teaches that.

And that has been done many, many times. If you become a specialist in a particular kind of cult, you have to invent a new one in order to have a ministry. I don't want you to have a dialectic approach to thinking about God, meaning that you always have to have an opposite in order to find the truth.

You know, dialectical materialism, Marxism was this, it was like, it was based on the dialectic of Hegel and the idea was, in order to find what was true, this is called thesis, the opposite was antithesis or antithesis, and the combination of that too was synthesis. So what Marxists in the early days used to do was create a problem. They did it in colleges, like demand the right to park your VW on the chapel roof.

It could be insane, it could be a legitimate concern. But you created a thrust into that work, tact it in other words, and then out of that thing came an opposite, something to fight that. And then everybody took a step closer to the truth.

And Marxism's entire belief system was based on something they believed in, like Christians believe God answered prayer, and that was that. They were working with the law of history. All they had to do was create the chaos, out of the system under attack would come something to oppose it, and then the whole combination of that would bring the world one step closer to world communism.

And it explains some of the weirdness of the culture of the 60s, most of you, they say if you were in the 60s you couldn't remember them anyway. But I think in a way the 90s began almost to be like the 60s flipped upside down. And I think we're going to be heading to a time when a lot of kids get into weird things.

Simply because they're so hungry, they're spiritually deeply hungry, but they're not Christian at all. And so they will adopt all kinds of strangenesses. My concern is not for the, we have a global audience now, and so it's so easy to pick up what any other religion, any other belief system on earth says or believes or does.

My concern is how does a person whose life is ordered by this book and what it says stop in their counseling or their ministry, even in their own lives, falling into the same trap that has opened the door to deception. I'm going to read you something, this is, I won't tell you what era this is, but I just want to read this paragraph. It was an age at once of atheism and superstition.

Strange to say that two things usually go together. And it talks about what the generation is like. It says they gave, they gave credence to sorcerers, to astrologers, and every species of imposter and quack.

The ceremonies of religion were performed with ritualistic splendor, but all belief in religion was dead and gone. What became of the common multitude? They too, like the superiors, learned to disbelieve or question the power of the ancient deities. But as the mind absolutely requires some religion on which to rest, they gave their real devotion to all kinds of foreign deities.

And then it lists them, to magicians, to exorcists, not exorcises, but people, you know, Rosemary's baby, you know, those kind of things. And this was describing the state of Roman society. This is not, see, and I believe this, like that ancient city at that time, our generations are witness to the collapse of civilization.

And so, like now-dead Roma said, our streets are filled with joyless kids who in their search for purpose and freedom have given their lives and hearts to strange gods and the merchants of spiritual destruction. So the good thing about reading stuff like this, and it's amazing when you read accounts of so long ago you would swear you're reading about today, because the principles remain the same. And the great thing about reading stuff like this is that you know if this was like that then, then the answer that changed that will also change this.

And because God transcends culture, the laws of God are descriptions of reality from an infinite perspective, and what he says transcends the culture. That's why I don't believe in being relevant. I call this the irrelevance of being relevant.

You never should try to be relevant. It's a stupid thing to do. By the time you get relevant, you'll be outdated.

And there's this constant attempt we have to stay up with the times. I think God calls us to be ahead of the times. I think God calls us not to be parrots, but prophets, that we're to be way ahead of the curve.

And that means that sometimes when you talk or say things, it won't tie immediately in with what is happening. But give it 10 years, give it 15, and you'll see that. Os Guinness has a wonderful little book here in the Revival Library, and it's got a strange title.

It's called Prophetic Untimeliness. That's a very weird title, but all the people who hung around Francis Schaeffer had strange titles. The God who was there, he was there and he's not silent, and you know, you think he ran out of titles, but they're all profound and important and significant basis.

Prophetic Untimeliness, in effect, Os Guinness says this, if you want to know what the future looks like, you can't project the present. The present is fractal. It keeps changing all the time.

And like the movement of hurricanes and storms, it is not linearly projectable. According to some ancient estimates, we shouldn't be able to move anywhere today because the horse manure should be this high, but we got horses off the roads and put iron horses on instead. And the whole future changes with one little thing.

So Os said the way to find the future is not to try and project the present, but to step out of time, untimeliness, not untimeliness, to step out of time, to get a look into the face of eternity and then come back and you'll be able to say where it's going. So our desire then is for us to learn to be people who live by looking at the face of eternity, not just looking at whatever the culture says or whatever you have to do because look at this, that, the other thing. So I'm going to give you first a simple list of why people say that kids get into some weird thing.

In the 60s and early 70s there were some very, very strange works. I won't name them all, but a few of them might suffice. We had kids joining families like the Manson family.

Manson is still alive and still scary and there's been at least three movies made of his life. And remember some of his followers tried to assassinate presidents and stuff. Why in the world would really nice kids get into that kind of following? We have the sad story of Jim Jones.

Why would an entire church all commit suicide? These are things that when they hit it's almost like a virus. You'll see this when there are suicides in schools. Somebody kills himself and then almost like a virus a whole bunch of kids start killing themselves.

So what we're looking at is why does this happen? And everybody always asks at the end of it, how could that possibly happen? Are we saying that these people are all stupid, they had no idea what they were doing? Or did they intelligently and deliberately give themselves to something that killed them? You could go through the last 30 years and just pick out communes, all kinds of different things that looked wonderful when they started but somehow along the line screwed up. So my boy asked me this question, could you do a tract or a booklet or something on cults? So what you hope to do then is to get all of the weird things that people can believe and then put a contrast in. That is too complicated, can't do it.

So I'm going to give you first of all seven key reasons why most people think this is why a person gets into some weird thing. And you can scribble these down if you like. The first one is alienation.

It's quite obvious that this is a generation without family. And we all want to be loved and we all want some group to join that loves us and will give us some sense of identity, some sense of value and worth and I belong to something neat. And there's nothing wrong with that.

Often a cult will overwhelm a kid caught between some, you know, when you're young and you've got all these great dreams and it looks like your culture is falling apart and then somebody comes and promises you, if you join us, this is your answer, you see. So that's an obvious one. The second one is disillusionment.

A lot of kids went out in the streets and some of you used to be those kids on the streets because home was hell. It just, whatever they offered you, it doesn't mean to say they beat you and abused you and they're all drug addicts or something. It just simply means that your deepest spiritual needs were not being met in whatever you saw.

You went to church, it didn't help you. You went to, your home didn't help you and all the things that seemed so good didn't work at all. Very often drug addicts are contacted by cults in prisons and even in courtrooms after they've been sentenced that we will help you.

I'm thinking of Mike Tyson who converted to Islam because he was visited by a group of people who said to him, you didn't do anything wrong. What you did was not wrong and so he converted from Christianity with some well-meaning people prayed with him to receive Christ a couple of weeks before to Islam because it seemed, this is the answer, this is what I really need. So that's two.

Three, if you don't have something in your life, in your heart of the reality of what God is, this is back to the counterfeiting thing, if you haven't got something solid, you will still have a spiritual hole in your life and just the words are not enough. There has to be a power and a reality in what you learn. So kids, you don't get some strong foundational truth and that's not how many animals did Moses tuck into the ark or other great intelligent things that you learn in Sunday school.

If you meet somebody when you're spiritually hungry who's working full-time for God quite unquote, you can just connect right into that. Fourthly would be idealism. Those who see a sick and decaying world and little hope or evidence of change and look what's happening to the economy and stuff.

This is a ripe grounds for weirdness to happen. If then rebellion, here's a cool one and you'll see this come out a little later. You may get really hurt by the church and it's really scary when you get hurt by the church because those are the people who are supposed to help you.

But I'll put it like this, religion has been one of the greatest sources of violence and rebellion in all of history. You can go through history and the church did this and the church did that, we're not identifying with saying this is what Christianity is supposed to be. But to the world, they don't see any difference between the fig tree and the olive.

The olive in the Bible is a symbol of spiritual reality, of spiritual history. The fig, which doesn't look anything like an olive, is the symbol of religious history. But to the pagan world, religion and genuine spirituality, the same thing.

They mean exactly the same thing. I think it's neat that when Jesus first came, he said to one of those he called, when you are yet under the fig tree, I saw you. Spiritual hunger that's not being met by religion but can be met by the olive.

So that's rebellion. And the sixth would be experiential. If your life is now connected to deep spiritual feelings, you want to feel good, you want to feel power, you want to feel those things, then anybody can offer those things.

Here's the four, love, wisdom, worship, power. If you remember those four, those are the four great needs of man. Love, Josh McDowell says, everybody has two great fears.

One, that they will never be loved, really loved by anybody. And two, they'll never be able to really love anybody else. Second is wisdom, a source of unimpeachable reality.

We're all looking for things that will be really true, not just seem true but are really true. And then power, we all need, no man's an island, we all need more than what we've got now. That's the second law of thermodynamics, if you want order in your life, you have to access energy higher than your own, or

intelligence higher than your own.

The system that reorders a disordered system has to be more powerful and more organized than the system it's trying to reorder. That's physics. You can't just love and just stay the way you are.

Bible puts it like this, let him that is filthy be still more filthy. If you're screwed up now, time is not your friend, it's your enemy. The further along the trail you get, the more screwed up you'll be.

And it takes an intervention higher than where you are now for that change to take place. So when kids try to come and experience something powerful or something wonderful, the last one was worship by the way, you've got to give yourself to something greater than yourself in order to live a life that's challenging. You need more than what you've got now.

We are designed to be challenged. How do you build a physical muscle? Now I can't show you mine, but if you're going to build a muscle, how do you do that? You work it, yeah. And you actually have to do two things with it.

You have to stress it a little bit more than it's used to and you have to do it in a series of days and then you've got to take a rest so your muscle can recover. The fibers break down, the rest they rebuild stronger than they were before and then you do a little bit more stress and that's the way you build a muscle. How do you build emotional muscle? Exactly the same thing.

How do you build mental muscle? Exactly the same thing. You have to stress where you are now, give something a little bit bigger, a little bit longer than what you did before and that's the way you grow. God has a simple way to do that.

He simply says, be perfect. We put out bumper stickers, Christians aren't perfect, only forgiven. We're going to stand before God one day wrapped in nothing but that bumper sticker and give an account of what we did with his birth.

Be perfect, he said. We think that means be faultless, be infinitely wise. It has nothing of the kind.

It simply means living up to the light you've been given. Because he's infinite and we're finite, it simply means you'll always have something more to learn, you'll always have something else to change in your life and that will never end. Four billion years from now, you'll still be learning from God.

We'll never be able to do table talks on God and, okay, we've done God for ten weeks, let's move on to something better. There is nothing better, he is everything. And then the last one seems strange but it actually has been called intellectual pride.

But there's another way to describe what this is. Intellectual pride is the desire for answers that can be easily understood that make you feel superior. In other words, I've got hold of something.

Now here's the weird thing. What you get hold of may be true. It doesn't have to be false in itself.

We're looking not at what you're learning, we're looking at why you came to learn that and what the result of that is. The Bible says knowledge puffs up. So simple data is not going to save your soul.

A lot of people who went to seminary went to hell. You understand that? Nothing wrong with seminary. I'm saying that it's possible to educate yourself and the whole heart and basis of your life is being cleverer or

smarter than somebody else.

The Bible speaks about, and God talks about this, I'll just sum it up in saying this. If the consequence of education divorced from God breeds arrogance. Consequence of education, any kind of education, religious education, divorced from God breeds arrogance.

So I remember as a young Christian, there was a young man about my age, I think he was actually a bit younger, and he was astonishing in the knowledge of the Bible he had. He had memorized whole, seemed like you could push a button and scripture would spout out of him. And it would just come out.

I was very impressed with his knowledge. But what really bothered me is his attitude to people. It was arrogant, it was dismissive, it was like, oh, well you can't possibly, you know, it was that thing.

And here's a little thing we'll learn as a result of what we'll look at in our sessions tonight. The first test of somebody screwing up is not the information they give you. It's something a lot deeper than that.

It has to do with the spirit and the attitude of the person. And we're going to see God's test for what real wisdom looks like in a little while. But at the moment, we'll call this the desires for answers that can be easily understood to make you feel superior.

And there is a tremendous amount of information given in our kind of culture. What is the danger of Googling? The danger of Googling is that you assume that everything you're looking at is true because there's so much of it. But what is the consequence when you get that data? Does that make you feel greatly superior to anybody else, that now you know all kinds of things? And what we overlook many times in our acquisition of data is, what is this doing to my soul? It doesn't mean be transfigured by the removal of your mind.

We sometimes represent that, you know, this person's, you know, obviously they can't be spiritual because they've learned too much. It's not the same thing. It has to do with why you're learning and even the methodology of how you're learning.

And that brings me to this thing. I'm not going to go through details of individual deals, but there is a divine order and truth. I've said this in different things before.

There is a way, the godly way to learn things is with this understanding. The God we serve, the real God, there's a bunch of gods in the world, many gods and stuff, false gods, fake gods, dumb little gods, but the real God, the big one, the first commandment to Israel was not believe in God. It's make sure that the God you believe in is the real one.

And I'm him. See that? I am the Lord your God. That's how it starts.

Not some other Baal deity that you've got to feed your children to and, you know, not I am. You shall have no other gods before me. Doesn't say there aren't any other gods.

It says don't have anyone. Don't put something in my place that belongs to me. And the characteristic of this God is that he is infinite, he is personal, and he's awesome.

He really is. So if we start with this infinitely wise God, we should start with this assumption. God is God and I am not.

That's the best lesson I can give you and there's thousands of pages of Bible stuff in the Revival Bible, a summary of the whole Bible for me. This will save you tens of thousands of dollars of theological fees. The summary of the entire message of this book is that one.

God is God and I am not and neither are you. If we get that, it'll be quite wonderful. So starting with that premise then, truth must come by revelation from the infinite to the finite.

Infinite to the finite. He's infinite. You'll never get back behind him to be able to explain him.

A God who is big enough for you to wholly explain is too small and that isn't the God of the Bible. You know, C.S. Lewis said, I know, what he said, I know God is not a figment of my imagination because he's not at all the way I imagine him to be. It's really easy to make up your own God and worship it.

See that? You get a dumb little God that fits in and looks just like you. So he isn't you. He's bigger, infinitely bigger than you can imagine.

He has to dumb himself down to talk to us. This book is God for dummies. He's got to dumb himself down.

Infinite must reveal himself to us. So the first bottom line is the divine order and truth is you need to be shown. We say it like this, God speaks.

Now we know he's spoken in this book. This is not an ordinary book. It's not like any other religious book on the planet.

This is God's book. The real God's book. And it is so amazing.

You can read something in here hundreds of times and some other time you'll just come and you look at it and it'll light up like a Christmas tree and so will you. Because there's an infinite mind behind here. I reckon when you open the Bible it should be like the opening of a Mission Impossible movie.

You know, there's a... and the fuses are burning through. That's what I feel like... You know, something in here. So revelation, keep that in mind.

God speaks. That's point one. Point two is what is the second step after God has talked to you? I'm going to look at how do we test whether it's God and stuff like that.

But remember this. Truth must come by revelation. When Jesus asked the disciples, now here are these guys, bless their hearts, that southern expression, that's a nice way of saying what an idiot, and William and I were talking about this a couple of days ago, J.B. Phillips opens up the letter to Galatia, his translation of it is, it's, oh foolish Galatians, he opens it up, dear idiots.

It doesn't mean they're stupid, that they don't have the intellectual machinery, it doesn't mean that they don't have the information, it's sitting there and you don't see it, that's what the word is. So the dear, though it's interpolated, it's a nice dear, it's not a putting down dissing dear, it's saying, are you crazy, it's that thing, are you crazy, are you dumb, are you dumb, it's that constantly saying, it's right there, it's sitting in front of you, you've got the equipment to do it, why don't you see it. Jesus is talking to the disciples and he asks them, who do men say that I am, remember that, who do men say that I am, and they proceed to tell him what people's opinions of Jesus is.

Now if you Google search this, you'd have a very big search, who do men say that I am, and then some say you're this, some say you're that, some say you're prophet, some say you're John the Baptist, though I don't know why they would compare Jesus, because Jesus still had his head and John the Baptist was decapitated at the time, some say you're Elijah, some say you're this prophet, you know, they went on, everybody gave their opinion of what other people said. Now these are his disciples, he's the one he's picked to walk with them, and then he looks at them with those eyes that have eternity in them and he says, who do you say that I am? And that is a serious question, because on the base of whether you get that one right, it hinges your whole life and your future. Who do you say? Now Peter, this is the disciple, remember the foot-shaped mouth, the disciple who's had the dubious distinction of being interrupted by all three members of the Godhead at one time or other in his ministry.

This is that disciple, and he goes, but he gets it, he gets it, and it doesn't come from comparing what he thinks or what the crowd thinks. He says, you're the Christ, you're the son of the living God. And Jesus looks at him and he goes, blessed, he doesn't say bless your heart, he goes, blessed are you, gives his legal name, Simon Bar-Jonah, I know who you are, now I'm going to tell you, see that? Flesh and blood didn't show you this.

You didn't get it by study, you didn't get it by going to a really cool Bible study, you got a revelation from heaven. It was revealed to you, see? And I believe this, you get saved on the basis of a revelation to your life of who Jesus really is. It doesn't come by studying stuff about Jesus or reading stuff about Jesus, that helps.

When we were in Mexico many years ago, we stayed with some friends there and there was a very wealthy family, I won't tell you what they did, but I'll just put it like this, they were one of the wealthiest families. They could afford to live where all the crooks live, where all the drug dealers, who make more money in a week than Bill Gates makes in a year, they stayed there. And this man and his uncle, neither Christians, but the wives, the wife of each, I'll put it that way, the wife of each of these, both had got saved and they wanted us to come over and have lunch with them and get them saved in the next three minutes after the tacos were delivered.

Well, I sat down and I'm sure the wives had already witnessed to them or something. The first words this guy said to me, we haven't even started yet, he said, what about the Canaanites? Now, you're sitting in this long table, it's about as long as this room, and his first words are, what about the Canaanites? And I'm looking at him like, it sounded like he said, what about the Canaanites? And my eyes are rolling around, I'm thinking, what about the, yeah, what about the, yeah, what about the Canaanites? I don't know what he was talking about. And then I'm realizing I'm running into this intellectual argument against the goodness of God, you know, why did God send these people out to kill the Canaanites, that thing, and this is opening statement.

So anyway, I went on for about, I don't know, half an hour or something, got quite embarrassing. You were there, weren't you? It was embarrassing. William went out into the, he walked out, it was too embarrassing.

But at the end of it, I've forgotten, my end was, look, you may be right and there's no God and I might be utterly wrong, but when we die, we'll find out. If we die and we just do it, none of this conversation will matter at all. But if you're wrong and what has happened to me is real, you've made the stupidest mistake in your life.

And I asked God to, I said, God's going to have to really reveal himself to you. The funny thing, was it the day after, son, or was it later on that afternoon when the hail came? I can't remember either, but he went out to play dominoes or something with his friends. And when he came back for lunch, it hailed, it snowed.

This is Mexico, okay? It's summer, it snowed. And just around the block, there's nothing out there, right there, there's bouncing hailstones. And his eyes got as big as Snoopy the vulture dog.

He just watched this weirdness of weather right there around his house. And later on, his wife said, before he went to bed that night, he said, I really better think about God. But after he'd gone the first time, I went to, I just looked at his library and I saw an entire shelf of books written about God, written by people who don't know God.

Whole shelf full of them. There were whole lectures from different universities by different professors showing the unreliability of this. And right on the bottom, there were like two shelves and there were Christian books.

And one of them was my friend, Joshua McDowell's book, Evidence Demands a Verdict. So I pulled it out, you know, my wife was there. And you know how people underline things when they're important? After the introduction, it looked like every page was underlined.

Not just, I mean, every, every, like a yellow page, okay? And then it's more yellow page. And it went on like this for three chapters and then nothing. So I said, what happened here? She said, oh, he doesn't like that book.

That's the problem, do you understand? It's not data. When what Josh laid out began to go straight against all of the carefully buttressed arguments he'd built up as to give him a reason why he should not live without God, he didn't want to read it anymore. And I thought that was cool.

And then God did the hails, you know? So it's, put it like this then. Revelation, God speaks. Jesus says to Peter, you are, I say to you, flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you, I say to you, you are Peter.

You know who I am now. I'm gonna tell you who you are. So put it like this.

When you know who Jesus is, you'll also start discovering who you are. Because our value is bound up in his. And Shofie used to put it like this.

If God is dead, man is dead. When you know who Jesus really is, not by data, not by information, not just by reading or somebody else saying this is what we think. But by revelation from heaven, God the Holy Spirit shows you this is my son.

When that happens, your life really changes. And I say to you, he said, you are Peter. His is a word, Petros.

It's a word that means pebble, it's a little pebble. Some people think Peter was the first Pope. I don't think so, because he was too dumb to be a Pope.

You have to be really smart to be a Pope. But he called him Petros. I say to you, you are a pebble.

And on this rock, not on the pebble, a mountain rock, two words, two different words. On this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. What we're talking about tonight, the thing

that hell hates most.

What is that rock? Not Peter, not a mere created man. But the revelation Peter was given that upon this rock, I will build my church. The revelation of who I am.

Boy, that's great sound effect. God, I love that. So here's the first one.

Revelation, God speaks. Second one goes like this. Practical obedience, practical service.

The second step when God shows you is not to ask him to explain it, but to do it. So let's put it like this. God speaks to, I do it, I obey, that's it.

You can ask God questions, but not when he shows you something that requires obedience. That's not, you don't have to ask questions. You don't have to go, well, why? That's a dumb question.

God speaks and the next thing is practical service. Practically do what he says. And see the word service? I'm not just talking about you carry out some kind of butler thing.

I mean, you really begin to serve. You start humbling yourself. See, you are God, I'm not that whole deal.

So you do it, second step. Third step is illumination. So we've got revelation, we got practical service or practical obedience, and then thirdly, illumination.

Not the same as revelation. Illumination is being able to order the stuff you've got and sort of sort it so you can put it in nice little boxes and categories and work out stuff. But it means the explanation of the thing.

So the divine order and truth goes like this. God speaks, I do it, he explains it, maybe. And he doesn't frankly care whether he explains it or not.

Have you noticed that? We've asked God, look, you've got to show me like right now. And then nothing happens. You go, see that? So where is your heart? We're going, when you know, I'm not gonna do it.

That is not, a servant's heart is this. He just gets what he says and then he does it. He doesn't go, well, why does the house need painting? I mean, why? What people, any boss hates it when somebody asks all these, you know, we want to do this, this and that.

Why did it have to be done? And what did that, just, he wants to do it himself. Get out of the way and let me do it myself. So God's deal, he speaks, I do it.

He may explain it. Then maybe later on. Here's Saul riding his donkey and got orders to kill all the Christians.

Here's a terrorist whose ministry has killed Christians for God. A light, this is called revelation. If you were doing an X-Files episode, you have to wait till three in the morning when you're driving your car.

Your radio changes stations on its own. Then a light from a Hilton chandelier comes down. You black out, you wake up three days later with a little mark on the back of your neck and no knowledge of where you've been.

That's how the devil does it. Here's how God does it. Full on, bright sunshine, midday, noon.

A light from heaven. He doesn't have to show off. He just shows up, okay? He doesn't have to show off.

Devil has to be, and playing organs in the background. So he doesn't need to. He's scary enough.

He just shows up a little bit and people all fall over the place. Anyway, then the voice, Saul, Saul, why are you picking on me? He knows it's God, but he goes, what do you mean? I'm defending your cause. This is the Saul cult.

Killed Christians for very good reasons. Is Saul sincere? You bet he is. Is he steeped in knowledge of scripture? Yes.

He called himself Pharisee of the Pharisees. That means he was the best of the best. We think Pharisee today is that's the really bad guys.

The Pharisee was the best of the best in Jewish systems. It was like saying he's the Billy Graham of Billy Graham's in their day. It was the best you could get.

That's what Saul, now converted to Paul, said. Said, Pharisee of the Pharisees. Did he know the scriptures? Yes.

Was he sincere? Yes. Was he honest in his convictions? Yes, he was. Then why is he killing God's people? God shows up in person, reveals himself.

Saul, why are you persecuting me? Who are you, Lord? I am, he never, he never expects this. I am Jesus. You mean Jesus from Mexico? No, no, no.

I am Jesus and of Nazareth. Oh, that, from that loser city. That Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.

It's hard for you to kick against the bridge. What do you want me to do? Revelation, what do you want me to do? Rise, stand on your feet. I've got a job for you to do.

And that's Saul that becomes Paul. Later on, he finds out a lot more about Jesus. He didn't know it then.

He had to spend three years in the wilderness finding out some of that extra stuff. But you don't need lengthy explanations. I'm giving you this because Charles Finney, who I consider one of the greatest revivalists in the past couple of hundred years, I'm gonna give you a quote from him.

We think that the main reason why people go wrong is because they get the wrong doctrine. That's what we think. But how many of you have ever had a weird idea about God? Turned out, three of you.

You others, you're all liars and your time will come later. We all have weird ideas about God. We're finite people.

We don't know all this stuff. Remember, God is God. I am not, neither are you, see that? We're finite.

We don't know everything. That means true Christian consistency, Finney said, is that we change our ideas about Him as often and as fast as the Holy Spirit throws light on us. You never get set into a thing.

This is what I believe and I've poured cement and I hope it dries. Christian life is constant growth. See that? Doesn't mean you have no ideas at all.

It means that God constantly refines and shows you better and better what you're supposed to be. Okay, here's what Finney said. I've been led more to consider the importance of holding forth facts as such until they are believed as facts and then from time to time, he says, explaining their philosophy.

This develops and strengthens faith. It leads them to believe that God is to be trusted, that whatsoever he says is to be received barely on the authority of his own testimony. You see what he's saying? I'm pinching something.

I'm just gonna hold it out. I'm not gonna try and explain all the reasons. I'm just gonna hold it out.

This is what God says. Do it, okay? This develops and strengthens faith. It leads them to believe that God is to be trusted and that whatever he says is to be received on the authority of his own testimony.

Now, does this mean you can't, there's no intellectual justification for that? No, it doesn't. It's just that's the wrong place to put it. He said, it is easy to see the gospel should be presented and received in this way.

This is the manner in which the Bible everywhere presents it. First, receive the facts as facts simply because God affirms them. Afterwards, explain such as can be explained and comprehended for the edification and growth in knowledge of God's dear children.

But reverse the process and you will find that professed converts really have no faith and will either wholly reject or hold very loosely and doubtfully to every declared fact or doctrine of the Bible that does not admit of clear philosophical analysis and explanation. Their growth is not truly Christian growth. It is rather philosophical growth and often pride and egotism are its most prominent characteristics.

Revival fires, pages 30 to 32. The little book Charles Finney wrote at the very end of his life. This is a great book to read.

Read the book. The last book the person wrote at the end of his life when he's trying to tell you which paths not to go down because he's been down and got those and some gave you a holy T-shirt and then others gave you a holy T-shirt, okay, that. So I believe what he's really saying is this, that to the Christian, the first sign then should be a wrong spirit, a wrong attitude.

See, in other words, if we're going to see what is wrong in something, our first test shouldn't be that we need a whole encyclopedia on what that group is doing. You understand, this is the way we usually do. We start first with illumination.

We try to get as much facts and data together as we can about this cult or this growing danger to society, whatever it is. Secondly then, we figure out maybe the fruit of it. You know, what are they doing? See, what are they doing? For what they believe, what are they doing? And then we hope to get a spiritual understanding of that thing.

That is the exact reverse of the way God works. That's the way Greek philosophy works. You start with data, then you pick out of that data what you think you want to do and you hope you become spiritual.

So what we're talking about is a methodology, a bigger word would be epistemology, the way you learn what you learn. Not the data, but the way you learn what you learn. Now why am I harping on this and spending so much time on it? For this reason.

You don't have to be a highly trained Christian to recognize deception. God has designed it so a brand new Christian who's really saved should recognize it on contact. In other words, it is the spirit or the attitude of that thing that you should feel straight away.

If you have a clean conscience and you're really saved, you could be one single day old in the Lord and you'll run into, if you run into deception, you probably will straight away, then you should know there's something wrong with it. You may not be able to explain it, you just feel there's something wrong with it. I led a young man to the Lord, he's an ancient man now, like me, but he just got saved.

Real, wonderful, he got no Christian roots at all. All of his family are pagans, they were Marxists and, you know, materialists and Darwinists. There's nobody in his entire family, as far back as he can go, that's ever been Christian.

He got saved. Following day, he met a Jehovah's Witness at his work. And he's so excited, I'll give him a little track called These are the Facts, and I'll even copy this on what it means to get saved and signs of a new Christian.

And he said, it's so wonderful, I just met Jesus. And he thought the guy was a Christian because, you know, he's a religious guy and seemed to be carrying something, thought it was a Bible or something, make sure of all things. So he's happily telling him, it's wonderful.

And the guy goes, well, what do you mean? And then he said, well, look, it's this. He's showing him the track and the guy goes, oh, that can't be right, and that's not true, see that? So that day, he came back and he said to me, he's a bit crestfallen, the first Christian he's ever met turns out to be scary. And somebody that, you know, doesn't understand it, you know, it's like, you're a brand new Christian.

And he said, I met this guy at work, I don't know, you know? He said, I don't understand what he's talking about. He just said a few things. I said, I know who you met, see that? But he said, he said to me, there was something funny about it.

That's what I'm talking about. You don't understand what's going on in terms of what they taught or what they believed or what they're doing. You simply know this, there's something funny about them.

That's the way we were designed to live. See, that God, the Holy Spirit can show us, don't do this. Don't go with that person.

Don't have that business partner. Don't take this route. Don't do that.

And we're designed to live like this. If God speaks and we do it, and he explains it later on, then Finney said, it will increase our trust in God. So he said, what I've found is in the early days, he's a lawyer, he tried to show 400 reasons why Jesus is God and then give an invitation.

And that's all right, except the people that come base their faith on your wonderful explanation. So what if your explanation sucks? What if it isn't any good? What if your prophecy structure is actually not working? Do you understand? We can't have just merely intellectual or philosophical conduits. We have to people whose life and heart and spirit has changed.

So he said, what I've found, I just hold out. It's preaching Christ, not preaching about him. It's preaching him, holding him up.

If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to him. My job is not to answer all the objections and questions of a skeptic. My job is to hold Jesus out.

I remember this, about this guy in this university, he's first class and he's delighted in putting down all the Christians. How many are stupid enough to be a Christian? Put your hands up. And so, you know, a couple of stupid enough to be Christians, put their hands up and he's just unleashed this whole barrage of stuff and then this little black guy, I think he was an ex-minister or something.

He took out an apple and he started eating it, right? He was right in front of me. And he's crunching it like this and the guy said, excuse me, what are you doing? He said, I'm experiencing this apple. You can't argue out of what this apple tastes.

It's really good. Pity you don't have one. So man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument.

Take a break and then we'll go to part two of this. Is that okay now to do that? All right, take a break and then we'll pick up on this core thing. Why do people get screwed up?

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/CVt-CoqWwg4.mp4>

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