

THE SOUTHWESTERNER



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HOW TO FIND GOD? CODY WESTBROOK

How do you find God? Dr. Steve McSwain wrote an article for the Huffington Post in 2014 titled *How to Find God: The Five Ways*¹ in which he suggested “you are a spiritual person in union with God already” and “Instead of always looking for God, you will feel God and enjoy walking in the joy of this ineffable Presence.” The gist of the article is that the whole idea of “finding God” is wrong because “God is in you already,” and once a person comes to know that reality their life will change for the better. McSwain’s ideas are quite bizarre and, frankly, dead wrong, but he is not alone. A quick Google search of the phrase “finding God,” reveals news headlines like “Finding God in improv,” “Season of Lent is about finding God,” and “Finding God in Other Faces.” People have all kinds of unbiblical ideas about finding God but the fact that everyone seems to have some idea about what it means testifies to the reality that everyone has a desire to find Him (cf. Acts 17:27-28). But still the question remains, how and where is He to be found?

To answer the question we must consider some areas in which God is not found. First, He is not found in nature. It is true that God has generally revealed Himself in nature and that the creation testifies to His existence (Ps. 19; Rom. 1:20), but that is not what is under consideration. Our concern is the New Age, pop culture idea that a person can go into nature and somehow experience God in some mystical kind of way. As if a cool breeze or a breathtaking view possessed some ability to enlighten your “inner godhood.” Second, God cannot be found in emotion. Ours is an emotionally driven culture in which people tend to allow their feelings to dictate their thoughts and actions. But God does not communicate

or reveal Himself through how one feels. Such would be completely subjective and impossible to understand in a rational way. Third, God cannot be found through personal experience. I remember a funeral in which the speaker communicated a long emotionally charged story about how he had had a near death experience in which he went into heaven and received a message from God to share with people on earth. Interestingly enough, not a word of that message harmonized with anything the Bible actually says. Yet there are so many people who believe that they have had some sort of religious experience and their entire belief system is based upon it.

Where is God to be found, then? More to the point, how can He be known? Let’s allow Him to give the answer. Psalm 119:2 says, “Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart.” If we are to truly “find God” in the sense that we come to know who He is and what He requires, then we must turn to His Word. As mentioned previously, it is true that God has revealed Himself in a general way in creation. The design of the Universe is a powerful testimony to His existence. But, though mountains and the stars tell us that God exists, they don’t actually tell us anything about who He is, how He thinks, or what He requires. How could anyone actually “find God” without knowing those things?

Only the Word of God provides the answers to the questions that man seeks. Paul said,

But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things, which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of

¹ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/steve-mcswain/how-to-find-god-the-five-_b_4660375.html

God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:9-11).

The Psalmist said, "With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments" (Ps. 119:10). The prophet Isaiah said, "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near (Isa. 55:6). Is it wrong to seek the Lord? Absolutely not. In fact it is imperative that every human being do so. But to seek Him in the wrong place is a fruitless endeavor. Open up His Word. Study, meditate, and learn the mind of God as it is revealed in the pages of Scripture. Then, and only then, will you truly find Him.

SW



THE FAITH

Mike Bonner '06

The faith that was once for all delivered unto the saints is marvelous, magnificent and matchless (Jude 3). God through the Holy Spirit delivered the faith to His holy apostles and prophets (2 Pet. 1:19-21). The faith is exclusive in nature for there is only ONE FAITH (Eph. 4.5). The faith includes all men, Jews and Gentiles according to Paul's writing to the Ephesians (2:11-3:9). The Jews and Gentiles were required to live according to the instructions of the faith, which was called the truth of the gospel (Gal. 2:11-16).

The faith is so vital to the salvation of mankind, that it would be how man would be justified (Gal. 2:16-17). Paul would make it abundantly clear that the Law of Moses did not justify (declare man right before God) the sinner before God by the faith (Gal. 2:16). Christ, not by Moses, would justify the Jews and Gentiles; however, the faith was that system which established the Law (Rom. 3:30-31). The system of faith is through the utterances of God, for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17). The system of faith is contended by the preserved word of God, which is spiritual and will endure forever (1 Pet. 1:25).

This system of faith is authorized by the Father and spoken through by Jesus. Jesus would say, "I haven't spoken by My own authority, but the Father who gave Me what to say and what to speak" (John 12:48-50). God speaks through His Son, at one time He spoke through prophets, therefore we must listen to the

apostles who wrote down the spoken words of God (Heb. 1:1-2). The Father gave Jesus all authority and God put all things under His feet (Mat. 28:18). The system of faith is seen in different aspects in Christianity.

What is seen in the Faith? The oneness of church, the essentiality of baptism, the cohesiveness of the heavenly instruction and the Deity of the Godhead are essentialities of Christianity (Eph. 4:4-6). The faith involves our confidence and trust in Him and His will, for it is the only way to please the Lord (Heb. 11:6). Our Christian conduct is a result of the faith once delivered (Phi. 1:27). For this reason, we must preach the doctrine of Christ and not be fooled by the wiles of the devil and smooth speeches of false teachers (Eph. 6:11; Rom. 16:18). Let's remain focused upon the faith and have faith in the faith and know for a fact that the word, which the Lord gave, will judge us in the last Day (John 12:47-48).

The Biblical Messenger, 9th & Main Church of Christ Weekly Bulletin, March 20, 2019.

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DOCTRINAL PURITY OR COMPASSION

Steve Higginbotham

Have you ever been asked a question that was worded in such a way that you could not answer the question as stated? "Either or" questions are often like that. For instance, I might ask you the question, "Are you interested in improving your relationship with your spouse or are you interested in improving your relationship with you children?" Well, which is it? As you can well see, this is not a fair question. It creates a false division. It assumes that you cannot desire to improve your relationship with both your spouse and your children. However, hopefully we want to improve our relationship with both our spouse and our children and we need not choose between the two.

Recently, I have heard some statements similar to the above question. Some seem to be suggesting that we must choose between being doctrinally pure and being compassionate. For instance, when asked how to handle the issue of divorce and remarriage in a congregation, one preacher said the following: "You must decide what business you are in. You are either in the business of defining or defending doctrine, or you are in the business of changing lives." Now I beg to differ with this man's assessment. I don't believe that this is a choice that must be made. I don't believe that striving for doctrinal purity and being compassionate are mutually exclusive.

Both doctrinal purity and compassion are noble goals that are worthy of being pursued. Just check out the following passages (Galatians 1:8-9; Ephesians 4:32). Since both are noble goals, which one should we pursue? Which one is better? Do you think God would call us to pursue two worthy goals that were mutually exclusive of each other? Such a contradiction could not be harmonized with the nature of the God we serve.

Doctrinal purity and compassion are not poles apart as some would seem to suggest. In fact they must go hand in hand. What good would it do if I knew all the answers to doctrinal questions, and yet would not show compassion to my fellow man (James 2:13)? And what good would it do if I was compassionate to my fellow man but had little regard for the will of God (Matthew 7:21-23)? Rather than being goals between which we must choose, doctrinal purity and compassion cannot be separated.

Jesus best exemplified this truth. In Mark 10:17-22, we read of when the rich young ruler came to Jesus, asking him what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus, knowing his heart, knowing his attachment to money, told him he must sell all that he had and give to the poor. Upon hearing this answer, the rich young ruler went away sorrowful. In this case, Jesus demanded doctrinal purity. The demands were strenuous.

He didn't compromise the truth any to make it easier for this young man. Dare we charge the Lord with lacking compassion? We had better not. In fact, take a closer look at the text. What was Jesus thinking just before he stated this difficult truth? "Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him..."

Whether to uphold truth or be compassionate were not choices Jesus made, and neither should we. Rather, we need desperately to grow in both doctrinal purity and compassion toward those who need it.

The Word From Willette, Willette Church of Christ Weekly Bulletin, March 3, 2019.

SW

Why Every Christian Should be Interested in Evangelism

Doyle Wells

1. **Evangelism imitates the work that Jesus did on earth.** The record of Jesus' life shows more individual teaching situations than public. Privately teaching helps to explain the whole counsel of God, as Jesus did. Individual needs can be dealt with better in an individual teaching situation.
2. **Evangelism will seek and save the lost.** The purpose

of Jesus was "to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10). As Christians, we should be trying to find the lost who are unaware of their spiritual condition, and the Lord will work with us to open their eyes to His truth.

3. **Evangelism is one of the commands God has given us.** The disciples understood His command very clearly in the first century. It is no more difficult to understand today. Remember the command is to "Go and make disciples," not "Go and make excuses."

4. **Evangelism follows the pattern before us.** Paul said, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). We might call this spiritual 20/20 vision.

5. **Evangelism bears fruit that glorifies God.** The Bible is very clear that not everyone can be a public teacher, but every Christian is to bear fruit. Jesus said,

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2).

A few verses later, He added, "herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

6. **Evangelism helps us all to appreciate the power of the Gospel more and more.** The more we become involved in evangelism, the more we see the Scriptures applied personally to increase our own faith in the Gospel.

7. **Evangelism develops enthusiasm in the workers.** The more involved each of us is in the work the Lord has given us, the more enthusiastic we become. Involvement of individual Christians was the key to the growth of the Lord's church in the first century, and it will be today.

8. **Evangelism helps us appreciate the spiritual blessings we enjoy in Christ.** When an individual becomes obedient to the Gospel, the light of excitement as he or she begins to appreciate the spiritual blessings in Christ is seen in the eyes, and that helps the worker to have renewed appreciation for the spiritual blessings God has given us.

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." (Luke 10:2)

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Record for the Week of March 24, 2019

Bible Class	145
Morning Assembly.....	200
Evening Assembly	199
Iglesia de Cristo	
Morning Assembly.....	N/A
Contribution	\$N/A

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PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER:

Ghia-Page Westover, sister of **Alec Westover** is hospitalized after an accidental shooting. She's had multiple surgeries and could have more.

Health Concerns: Lois Ewald, Charlene Johnson, Diana Rodriguez, Bud Wade, Clarence Whetstone Angela Young.

Shut-ins: Jeannette Hansen, Rosemary Garrett, Jon Little, Bobby Johnson, Elvira Martinez, Ginny Oswald, Jan Smith.

Others: Sonny & Lee Barr, Bill Ellison, Bonnie Gomer, CK Holt, Nell McCown, Bill & Nancy Ponds, Cheri Sarten, Kay Westbrook, Gib Young.

GO PAPERLESS

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