

“How Do You Know?”

By Phil Robertson

My dad has always enjoyed telling a joke about the thermos. It goes like this. Three men were arguing over what had to be the greatest accomplishment of mankind. One said it was the trips to the moon. Another said it was modern medicine and all the cures. However a third guy said it had to be the thermos. Bewildered the first two men said, “Why the thermos? All it does is keep hot things hot and cold things cold.” To which the third guy replied, “Yea, but how does it know?” Think about it. It’s silly, I know.

However, how often do you hear people saying they know what God wants? A young fella walks into a church for the first time and immediately says, “I know this is where God wants me to be.” A lady switches from one church to another because she likes the elaborate music and the “contemporary” worship service. When the emotion fills her heart, she says, “I knew this is where God was directing me.” Another man looking for deeper love, leaves his wife and moves in with a girlfriend. This new relationship is exciting and he thinks, “Doesn’t God want me to be happy? Obviously, this is where God wants me to be.”

Mankind has a long history of transforming personal opinion into God’s will. He wants to make God in his own image. He assumes that what makes him feel good is what God wants. God has always challenged these blind assumptions. “You thought that I was one just like yourself” (Psalm 50:21). He even challenged man’s ability to reason at all without His guidance.

In the day of Hosea, the Israelites, who were “God’s chosen people,” were condemned for trusting in their “own ways” (Hosea 11:13). They claimed to praise the Most High but they never consulted Him (Hosea 11:7). God said, “My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). They did not consult God, instead they sought counsel from their “wooden idols” (Hosea 4:12).

Jeremiah warned the nation of Judah about seeking any man's advice. He said, “O Lord I know that the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

Even Solomon, the wisest man ever to live, repeatedly warned of the foolishness of following human wisdom.

- “The way of the fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise” (Prov. 12:15).
- “There is a way that seems right unto a man, but its end is the way to death” (Prov. 14:12).
- “Every way of man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts” (Prov. 21:2).
- “The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge but the mouth of the fools feeds on foolishness” (Prov. 15:14).

Instead of assuming we know what God wants, we should trust God knows what we need. “Seek Me and Live” says the Lord (Amos 5:4). He will illuminate our path and direct us in the ways of righteousness (Psalm 116:165; Psalm 23:3).

Therefore the only way we can really know what God wants is to study the Bible. It is His Word (2Tim. 3:16-17). It is His will for our lives. If we cannot find it in His Book, then we do not have any reason to say, “I know this is what God wants for me.” (via Hueytown Church Bulletin; Hueytown, Alabama)

The Gift of Sleep

Sleep is essential for good health. Scientists don’t know exactly why we need it but they know what happens when we don’t get enough. We put ourselves at risk of premature aging, weight gain, and diseases ranging from colds and flu to cancer. Mentally, sleep deprivation can lead to memory loss, depression, and some forms of psychotic behavior. What God accomplishes in our bodies while we drift off to sleep is remarkable. While we do nothing, God

replenishes our energy, rebuilds and restores our cells, resets our nerve cells, and reorganizes information in our brains.

The reasons for not getting enough sleep are many, and some we can't resolve, but the Bible indicates that overwork should not be one of them (Psalm 127:2). Sleep is a gift from God that we should receive with gratitude. If we're not getting enough, we need to find out why. Are we rising early and staying up late to earn money to acquire things we don't need? Are we involved in efforts that we think no one else is capable of doing?

We are sometimes tempted to believe that the work we do when awake is more important than the work God does while we sleep. But dismissing God's gift of sleep is like telling Him that our work is more important than His. God does not want anyone to be a slave to work. He also wants us to enjoy His gift of sleep. If we do not come apart and rest awhile, we may just plain come apart. (Adapted from an article by V. Havner)

People Just Like Me

Qumran was a first-century Jewish community that had isolated itself from outside influences to prepare for the arrival of the Messiah. They took great care in devotional life, ceremonial washings, and strict adherence to rules of conduct. Surviving documents show that they would not allow the lame, the blind, or the crippled into their communities. This was based on their conviction that anyone with a physical "blemish" was ceremonially unclean. Disabled people were never on their guest lists for dinners.

Ironically, at that same time the Messiah of Israel was at work in the cities and villages of Judea and Galilee. Jesus proclaimed His Father's kingdom, brought teaching and comfort, and worked mighty miracles. Strikingly, He proclaimed: "When you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed" (Luke 14:13-14).

The contrast between Jesus' words and the guest list of the Qumran "spiritual elite" is instructive to us. Often we like to have fellowship with people who look, think, and act just like us. But our Lord exhorts us to be like Him and open our doors to everyone. The inclusive gospel cannot be shared by an exclusive people. (G. Sweeting)

The Trail of Tears

A quite tragic event in US history was the forced relocation of thousands of Native Americans in the early 19th century. Native American tribes, who had struck treaties with and fought alongside the growing European population, were driven out of their ancestral lands. In the winter of 1838, thousands of Cherokee were forced to embark on a brutal 1,000-mile march westward known as The Trail of Tears. This injustice resulted in the deaths of thousands of people, many of whom had little or no clothing, shoes, or supplies for such a journey.

The world continues to be filled with injustice, pain, and heartache. And many today may feel as if they are leaving a trail of tears—tears that go unnoticed and grief that is not comforted. But our Lord sees our tears and comforts our weary hearts (2Cor. 1:3-5). He also declares the hope of a future time not marked by the stains of sin or injustice. In that day and in that place, "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

The God who offers freedom from tears in the future is the only One who can fully comfort our tears now. When God permits trials, He also provides comfort.