
“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

“What’s wrong with listening to a group sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and is it wrong to sing such songs accompanied by mechanical instruments?”

This is not only a good question, it is one that is vital. Let us look at two familiar passages: “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19) The second passage says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16).

May I ask a question just here? When one listens to a group such as a quartet or a choir sing spiritual songs, what thoughts are going through one’s mind? If the thoughts lean toward spiritual matters, we are attempting to worship in vain (Matt. 15:9; Mark 7:7-8). All spiritual, acceptable worship appeals to the mind. It is a function of the mind. It is not subjective, or according to one’s feelings. Are we listening for entertainment purposes? If the latter is the case, then we are using God’s name and spiritual songs in a way void of sound reasoning and we are in sin, being void of scriptural authority. We would say again that such is vain worship. Worldly things are to be put out of the mind. To listen to spiritual songs set to music is worldly.

The second part of the question is clearly defined in the two passages before us already. We are commanded to, “sing and make melody in the heart.” To sing spiritual songs with the instrument anytime or anywhere is without Divine authority. Can you imagine us singing, “The Old Rugged Cross” set to mechanical instruments when He Who died on that cross authorized only singing? It is like slapping the Lord in the face!

Instrumental music was never used by a congregation of the Lord’s people in the first century. In fact, instrumental music was not introduced in any worship service until the 13th century. The Greek Orthodox Churches in Greece still do not use the mechanical instrument. They understand that the word *psallo* means simply to sing. The only instrument that is to be played is the heart of man. To participate in the way the questioner asked is, indeed, a sinful practice.

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“Should a church continue to support a preacher who has a secular job and misses the Lord's Day worship on a regular basis because he has to work? This preacher is only at worship about half the time, but the congregation still provides him partial support. What about Hebrews 10:25?”

Hebrews 10:25 says, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” We understand that it is necessary for a man to earn a living for his family, including the preacher. Let us illustrate this with a factual account.

In October, 1958, a Gospel preacher started preaching full time with a salary of \$35 per month. His house rent was \$33 and his utilities were \$7. He worked by picking up and delivering clothes for a dry cleaning store, being paid 10 cents per garment he delivered, but he never missed a Sunday or Wednesday. Additionally, he worked seasonally at a cotton gin, but he never missed a worship service due to his work. He was a mechanic and worked on anything that had an engine, but he never missed a worship service. He farmed some with his Dad, but he never missed a worship service of any kind whether it was Sunday, Wednesday, or a Gospel meeting. All these jobs were necessary for him to take care of his meager obligations.

Anyone, whether he is a preacher or not, who has a job that requires him to work every Lord's Day, needs to get a different job, or maybe two different jobs. It is also understood that one doing public work is sometimes required, in emergencies, to work on Sunday, but most of the time the individual can make it to one worship service.

As for the preacher in question, how can he ever preach on being faithful in attendance and apply Hebrews 10:25, or any other passage that instructs one to be faithful? How can he preach on singing and making melody in the heart (Eph. 3:16; Col. 3:16) if he is not there? How can he teach and instruct regarding public prayers (Acts 2:42) if he is not there? He is obviously working, but what is he preaching regarding giving unto the Lord as we have prospered? (1 Cor. 16:1-2). His tongue would also be silent when it came time to proclaim God's Word with regard to the Lord's Supper every first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

“Half time” is not acceptable for anyone to worship God. There is no such thing as a “half time” Christian. We are either Christians or erring saints. There is no middle ground when it comes to our souls' salvation. Some may think that we are too harsh or critical. But, we ask, “Which are more important, material possessions or the soul?”

One of these days the material will melt with fervent heat (2 Pet. 3:10). The soul that is prepared will go home to be with God. This scenario displays very poor judgment that influences everyone who knows the preacher. He—and anyone else who succumbs to

this—is a poor example and exhibits a lack of love for the Lord and His blood bought church (Acts 20:28).

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From a reader of *The Gospel Preceptor* comes this question, printed as it was written: “Revelation 22:18 the verse has been used by several people, in church of Christ to apply to the whole bible, we know that not all verses are relevant, what are your view over this, even in the issue of one cup this verse has been applied where it is not appropriate.”

Thanks for your question and or statement. First of all, I would like to make some comments regarding the truth.

Attitudes toward truth today are lamentable. In the Lord’s church there is less interest in truth than ever before in my lifetime. In this missive I am going to give some false views (fatal error) regarding the truth as well as Scriptural views.

Truth is absolute. By this I mean that it does not change. The Fount from which it comes is pure and it is incorruptible and undefiled and does not change. Philosophy says that truth is relative. They mean by this that truth changes and more so with every generation. We thus have the need for new Bibles every year or two. It may be wrong today to lie, cheat, steal or commit adultery etc., but in a decade or two these all may be accepted as a proper way to live. The truth is still the same—absolute—objective and never subjective. It is the truth whether anyone knows it or not. I could write many pages on this aspect alone, but what I am attempting to do is to elevate the truth to its proper level for reasons that will follow.

There are many religious doctrines that are false that are being taught in the world. Great numbers laugh at the truth; even among those who have attained high academic degrees. These doctrines are taught so that people will live by them. They make fun of the truth. One holds one view of truth another a different view and they are both contradictory. Why should one man accept a religious doctrine which is nothing more than a human doctrine? Many things could be said regarding this, but there is only one major thing of importance to be said and that is we should hold to a doctrine because it is true. It comes from God. One philosopher said that the only reason that one should hold a certain doctrine is because it is found to be true. If there is truth in religion there should be the compelling notion that one should change their views when they find out that what they have believed is false. Universities are constantly trying to turn people away from God. I believe that the USA is in great danger. Many of the people who should be helping are actually hurting by not making Christianity what it ought to be. There are many in the church that have turned away from the truth with the idea that not all truth is absolute and you can believe what you wish to believe.

Jesus said, “Ye shall know the truth and *the* [eph.hdd] truth shall make you free (John

8:32). The seed is the word of God Luke 8:11. Peter said, "... you have purified your souls in obeying the truth..." (I Pet. 1:22). Knowing and obeying the truth is absolutely necessary to the saving of one's soul, I do not equivocate on this, but am ready to defend this in public. Since truth is so important it is good that we look at some incorrect and some correct views of truth.

It is a fatal error to hold that truth can be diluted by mere human doctrine and still be acceptable to God. It is hard for me to believe that people could believe that. Since my parents and grandparents were members of the church, and as a child I was taught the Bible is true always and error will not change that. I realize that I had a helpful situation in my life, but today the church is not like that. Jesus said that it was a sin to add to this Book Rev. 22:18. This is a plain and simple statement. If you do not speak what the Bible speaks you will be held accountable before God. The Bible is inspired, it is complete, sufficient and is authoritative. It does not need any help from me or you or anyone else in the world. It is already exactly what it ought to be.

It is a fatal error to hold that men can take away from the truth and achieve the result that it will still be acceptable to God. They argue that they are not changing anything, but we are just dropping out a few chapters here and there. Jesus further said something about taking away. "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:19). You have to *try* to misunderstand those simple words. At times men are prone to not study all that the Bible says on a subject because they might find where they are in error. As a result, they read only that which will accommodate their views or lifestyles or drop the Bible from their lives altogether. Many years ago, there were many Gospel preachers who were willing to meet in public debate those who hold error, but a terrible thing has happened. We have fewer who are willing to do this, but we have many who do not care enough about the truth anymore to defend it. This ought not to be. Moses said not to add to or diminish ought from the Word (Deut. 4:2). It is clear that the Word of God is perfect and God will *not tolerate* me changing anything in His Word! Neither is He going to tolerate you or anyone else in the world, whether they have read the Bible or not, He will not tolerate our changing it. It does not need our help in any way to make it truer. It is a false view to think that we have the right to add, diminish or change anything in it. As that truth now stands it is able to furnish man completely unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:17).

Now to your specific question regarding Rev. 22:18. Would you agree that we should abide by and teach verse 19 which says: "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book?" The book of Revelation was written to the seven churches of Asia (Rev.1:4). It was the revelation of Jesus Christ (Rev.1:1). There is an application to us also.

Next, look at Galatians 1:6-9 where the Scriptures forbids teaching or preaching another or perverted gospel. There is no evidence, to my knowledge, of any other congregation having this same problem, yet it is applicable for us in the 21st century.

Moses was the Inspired writer of Exodus and through his hand God brought ten plagues on Egypt! What do we learn? Paul wrote that things written “aforetime” were written for our learning (cf. Rom. 15:4). That being true, we may very well quote and teach the passage in question—Revelation 22:18—and learn from it that God means exactly what He says. There may not be physical plagues like Egypt or spiritual ones exactly like Revelation but there will surely be a spiritual one—hell—for the devil and his angels. The main thing that I would like to leave with you is this. Whether preaching or teaching, it must be done in context context context. Otherwise it is only a pretext. Thanks for your question.

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From a reader of *The Gospel Preceptor* comes this question as written: “Do demons possess people now also? If not why not? Is world Hystory and Archeology attesting things happened in old and new testament books?”

Thanks for your concerns and the questions that you sent. All questions are appreciated and will be answered in the order in which they are received.

Your question on demon possession has been discussed over and over without much satisfaction to many. Some have taken the position that demons were disembodied spirits that took their leave from the deceased and entered into a living individual thus possessed them. For this view there is not one Scripture to support it. Regardless, as far as the writer knows, there no other scriptural answers reading the origin of the demons.

The earliest that we begin to read of such is in Matthew 4:24 where the Scripture records this of our Lord: “And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.”

The word “demon” is the correct translation of the word “devils” in this verse. It means, and is, an evil spirit. Demon possession could, in some, give them extra ordinary strength as in Mark 5:4, “Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.”

Again, demons could rob one of his own strength and give him strength beyond comprehension as in Matthew 8:28-32,

And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come

hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.

Among other things it is interesting to note that the devils (demons) knew “Jesus thou Son of God” which is more than many in society today know or admit.

In Matthew 12:22 we note, “Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.” Here it is the case that the demon took away the ability to speak or hear. This robs one of their heart also. The Lord healed him. Mark writes, “And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak” indicating the ability that Jesus had to cast out the demons and heal individuals who were ill.

In Acts 16 Paul was at Philippi (vs. 12) and went to the riverside when he met Lydia and her household. Lydia and her household were baptized into Christ (vs. 15). The record says, “And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour” (Acts 16:16-18). Back in the mid 1970’s there was much interest in demonism, witchcraft, tea leaf reading, fortune tellers and more. The writer often spoke on lectureships where this was the theme. There were so many forms of the same kind of nonsense.

This damsel brought her masters much money with her services. Luke, the writer of the Book of Acts, does not say that she was literally doing those things only she was making her masters much money. They at least, and those that used her services, thought she could do those things. Paul, an apostle cast the demon out by the power of the Lord.

All such cases ceased at the conclusion of the apostolic age. They appear to accompany the time of the miraculous, and ceased when miracles ceased, as Paul said they would in First Corinthians 13: 8-10. Miracles accompanied this period to confirm the Word and their design was for the unbeliever. It is our position that we are not demon possessed as of old. If we were it would take a miracle to cast such out. Miracles have ceased as First Corinthians 13 points out.

This does not mean that the devil is not active today, but he can take over one’s life if one will permit such. Peter wrote, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). If we will cast our care on the Lord (1 Pet. 5:7) we can overcome anything the devil tempts us to do.

Regarding your second question history and archeology confirming various things

mentioned in the Bible, may we say that we have never been discouraged by the truth of the various sciences among us. True science, for that matter, *any* absolute truth will only show the Bible to be the absolute truth in every field of endeavor. For those who believe God's Word it is the final Word on any given biblical subject.

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From a reader of *The Gospel Preceptor* comes this question as written:

“In the congregation I used to be a member of, they have this structure whereby when marriage and home issues are being discussed, be it on the Lord's day or during the midweek classes, men and women teach the combined class in the form of a 'panel discussion.'

“For example, a man and his wife would be made to take the class, teaching and answering questions about marriage and the home. I understand the case of Aquila and his wife teaching Apollos but that was outside of the assembly wasn't it?

In view of what the Bible says about women teachers (1 Tim.2:12) is this a scriptural practice?”

Thanks for your concerns and the question that you sent. We will not use the names of the person/persons you reference in other remarks you made. All questions are appreciated and will be answered in the order in which they are received.

The short answer to your question is no. There is **no** authority for “team teaching” as it is generally called where there is a mixed audience of men and women. You indicate in your note to me that you understand Aquila and Priscilla of Acts 18:18-36 where “they” third person pronoun, took Apollos aside and taught him more correctly the way of the Lord. This is precisely what the Bible says regarding that matter.

There are those who are no more than extremists—false teachers—some from whom we have withdrawn our fellowship as the Scriptures instruct us to do in Romans 16:17 where Paul wrote, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”

What position did/do these take? They basically teach that a woman cannot teach a man anywhere, anytime, under any set of circumstances. In this doctrine a former neighbor had converted her husband out of Methodism and one of these false teachers came and told this Christian lady that she should “repent” for teaching her husband the truth! These false teachers began to lecture on such things as the “Priscilla and Aquila Syndrome” where they take the position that there is no proof that she taught Apollos anything whatsoever while Acts 18 teaches the very opposite of that doctrine.

Let us examine this a little further. What do they base most of their teaching on? They use the broader context of First Timothy 2:9-14 and argue that since this teaching on the role of women is based upon the basic principles of God's marriage law that she is

not permitted to teach but be in silence. Now, that is the general principle they stick to while their argument differs little from the main.

It is obviously clear that verse 12 of First Timothy 2 is talking about a public assembly due to the word teach which is more in line with public teaching or proclamation where the woman would be teaching over a man. On this we are in total agreement. Never should Christian women be put in a position of leadership in the Lord's church, such as teaching a mixed class of men and women, waiting on the Lord's table, leading a prayer or leading the song service. All these adult classes or worship assemblies must be led by men as the passage under consideration indicates.

But the false teachers take this further than what the apostle Paul did by asserting that the woman cannot teach a man anytime under any circumstance. Is that what the passage is teaching? Let us examine other Scriptures to learn what they tell us.

John 4 is an interesting chapter in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Would each reader of these lines read John 4:4-30 for the full context that we will reference? Here is a sinful Samaritan woman who meets Jesus at Jacob's well. Jesus asks her give Him some water to drink. She wonders why He—Christ—being a Jew would ask her for some water. Thus, the conversation is begun. Jesus asks her questions and she goes back to the city she is from and what does she do?

Verse 28 states specifically that when she went back to her city, she told the "men" what had happened to her. So much so that *they*, antecedent of the *men*, came out to see/hear Jesus. She was a woman was she not? Did she teach? It cannot be argued otherwise. She orally imparted knowledge to these men that produced faith to the extent they left the city to go and see Jesus.

The false doctrine held onto by some is justly defeated in John chapter 4. But they say she was a sinner! We reply, was she a woman? Was she first formed and then Adam? No! Therefore, their doctrine must be understood to be false to the extent that a woman cannot teach a man or men anytime, anywhere, under any circumstances. We know there are limitations placed on women as many passages teach.

Let's look even further. I would like to ask this plain unequivocal question: May a woman orally teach a man or men spiritual things in order to produce faith? I point the reader to the gospel records of the Lord's resurrection where there were women first at the grave. An angel told them to go and tell the eleven disciples that Jesus was raised from the dead. Those women, some of whom are named in the texts, did as commanded. How do we know this? "Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen" (Mark 16:14).

Notice then, if it was a sin for these women to tell the disciples that Jesus was risen then we have our Saviour being a party to—endorsing—sin as well as the angels that spoke to those women. The angels were not false angels for what they said was verified by the Lord Himself. The only ones in this narrative that Jesus reprimanded were the eleven disciples who failed to believe the evidence that was presented.

Some will turn and read Paul's first epistle to the saints in Corinth when he wrote, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak;

but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law” (1 Cor. 14:34). Observe the context in which this is written. First Corinthians 12 lists the spiritual gifts that the church in its infancy had which were received through the laying of hands that only an apostle could impart. Chapter 13 shows that these spiritual gifts would cease, they were thus temporary. Chapter 14 contains the regulations of those gifts.

The word “silence” used above is the Greek word *lalein* which means that she must not say one word. In other words, she was to keep her mouth shut! That had to do with the spiritual gifts. Obviously, women as well as men are commanded to sing and make melody in their hearts (Eph. 5:19). Somehow, the church at Corinth was lax in their teaching on such things and they allowed women to participate by speaking—taking the lead—in the assembly which she is not permitted to do anytime anywhere.

Women may teach other women as well as children’s classes. She may teach privately any man that needs instruction if she does this like Priscilla did. She may teach her children. She cannot team teach with an audience of men and women.

In closing these thoughts at this time would you imagine the scenario below. A religious man or men are going through town doing door knocking and asking religious questions. They come to the door when only the lady of the house is home. They ask, lady do you have any hope? What should she say? “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). Can you imagine her saying “yes, I have hope but I cannot tell you about it?” In doing that she violates this passage. By the false doctrine of false teachers, she really could not say anything. Thanks for your considerations.

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We have two questions to consider this month.

Question 1: Should a congregation governed by the men (no elders) be concerned if their part time minister also manages a tobacco outlet store?

This is indeed a good question, but not so easy to answer. We are reasonably sure that most would appeal to First Corinthians 6:20 where the apostle Paul said, “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God’s.”

In the very early 1960s we preached many sermons against smoking cigarettes. We were told that it was bad for our health. We were told that we ought to smoke cigars or pipes and that chewing tobacco did not hurt the body whatsoever. The late brother James D. Bales said to this writer that, “If you are not careful you will make this a hobby and ride it.” He said that he had violated his own body by the loss of sleep in order to write more books and do more of the Lord’s work so that his health was at great risk.

We did not know that much about tobacco in those years. Today, the scientific community has proof that all kinds of tobacco are not good for our health. It is a nasty, awful smelling, and expensive habit that is also addictive. Being addictive indicates that we are not in control of our own bodies or we cave in to the habit, but I have never known of a person having a wreck and killing innocent individuals because of nicotine. Tobacco today has warning labels, but the alcohol industry has a free reign. Surely the legs of the lame are not equal.

What kind of work should the part time preacher do? If he pumps gasoline he sells tobacco and many in my home state of Tennessee sell alcohol of various kinds. We thought that when the lottery came to our state that we would try to trade where the lottery was not offered. First thing we recognized is that many of the service stations or convenience stores participated in the lottery.

The medical community a few weeks ago said that the biggest health risk in America is obesity—eating too much. Could the part time preacher work at a fast food store? You see, the same passage that covers tobacco covers a multitude of other things. The difference is that one is accepted by mankind and the other is not so well accepted.

A deacon in a congregation that we once worked with contracted a strange kind of diabetes. It was a kind that was self induced. The doctor asked him to monitor what it was that he was doing every day and make a list of what he ingested. He ran a grocery store. The first thing on his agenda was drinking a soft drink upon his arrival at the store. He made note of it. By day's end he had consumed 36 soft drinks! Habit? Yes! Wrong? Yes! Good example? No!

Perhaps the part time preacher is not setting the best example, but he cannot run from the vices of others. Our experience has been that regardless of what he did some would have concerns because a preacher is many times the target of fast talk and little sympathy. One preacher took the position that if a postman delivered a manila envelope that may have a piece of pornographic material enclosed that the postman was contributing to the sin of the person receiving the mail. His elders asked him to come in for a meeting on this matter. They asked him if the postman delivered a Sears and Roebuck catalog was he endorsing all that the catalog advertised?

There not being elders in the congregation in question really has nothing to do with the problem.

Question 2: “What did Jesus mean when he told Mary, 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father...' in John 20:17?”

No doubt, this question has given rise to much misunderstanding and speculation because Jesus permitted or required “doubting Thomas” to touch Him as recorded in John 20: 27, but not Mary. What is the difference between Mary and Thomas? This strikes at the heart of the question asked. Mary did not doubt that this was Jesus. Thomas, on the other hand, was not even with the other apostles on the first Lord's Day after the resurrection. It is rather obvious that Thomas needed something that Mary did not need.

If we may factor in Matthew 28:9 we have a better understanding due to the fact that other women were, according to Matthew's record, prostrating themselves at the feet

of Jesus clinging to Him and worshipping Him. Apparently Mary would have done the same as the other women, but Jesus forbade it in her case. She could not touch Him.

Next, “Touch me not” may not be the best translation. Touch me not comes from a Greek phrase that means essentially “cease clinging to me.” This helps us understand the statement in Matthew 28:9 better. It is also a fact that when Jesus said, “for I am not yet ascended to my Father” there were many days left that Jesus would be on this earth. Mary was needed (commanded) to convey a message of faith to the disciples that “I ascend.”

It has always been interesting to me that Mary Magdalene was chosen to convey this message and was first at the tomb. Jesus had cast “seven devils” (cf. Mark 16:9) out of her previously. Obviously, she was now an ardent believer in Jesus. The writer suspects that we would have never had the problem with this passage had it not have been for Thomas. Two different people! Two different things! One was filled with joy and gratitude. The other was not sure that Jesus had risen.

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The following comes to *The Gospel Preceptor* from a reader in Missouri:

“Brother Davidson, What did the apostle mean in 2 Cor. 8:14 when he said that there might be equality? I have heard various explanations. I would appreciate reading your answer.” — D. R., Missouri

Answer: As in all cases, the immediate context and broader context is very important in understanding any Scripture. The late brother H. A. Dixon and brother G. K. Wallace kept on emphasizing context, context, context in the mid 1950s when the writer was in their Bible classes at Freed-Hardeman College. Look at the passage itself: “But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality” (2 Cor. 8:14).

Please let me say that this does not teach that we are to give to bring the poor up to our level or to give until we become poor. Equality cannot be reached that way. If all would go back to Second Corinthians 8 and begin with verse one, the picture will become abundantly clear. Paul intended to use the church at Corinth as an example of how people should give. Corinth was not responding in a positive way. Paul used Macedonia, a very poor congregation physically, as an example to attempt to get Corinth to take stock of the great blessings that they were receiving. Compared to Macedonia, Corinth was wealthy. According to the first several verses of 2 Corinthians 8 Macedonia actually had need that someone help them. There is only one thing wrong with that statement. While they knew they were poor, dwelling in poverty, they first gave themselves to the Lord (cf. 2 Cor. 8:5). This record reminds the writer of the conditions that prevailed on the farm during World War II. Almost all of us were poor, but no one, in-

cluding us, knew such was the case.

Paul was not readily agreeable to receive a contribution from the Macedonians according to verses 4 and 5. Corinth was able financially a year ago (verse 10), but for some reason they stopped or lacked in their giving. Paul is using Macedonia as an example for Corinth to follow. It should have been the other way around. Now get the picture!

When those who are poor and those who are rich have given according as they have prospered (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1-2 and 2 Cor. 8:9) there is equality. It is still that way. If the widow gives her two mites and the wealthy gives as he has prospered there is equality. These great verses were never intended to teach that we should give until others are brought up to our level or us down to their level. When we all have given as we ought there is equality and this is what Paul is talking about. One is not necessarily blessed for being poor financially or wealthy. One is blessed in these matters when each has given as prospered. Then and only then has each done his part.

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Via the internet comes the following question and comment: **“We take the Lord's Supper every Sunday morning, but only offer it on Sunday night. Why not take it both times? Sunday night is also a worship time. Could you discuss this question with others and get back with me.”**

Answer: Matthew's account of the instituting of the Supper is found in Matthew 26:26-29. Please note that verse 29 says, “But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.” In instituting the Lord's Supper, our Lord essentially is saying not now, but later in My kingdom. In Acts 2:42 Luke wrote, “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” The Kingdom had its beginning earlier in the same chapter of Acts. They are now communing with the Lord in His kingdom—church.

In Acts 20:7, Luke the inspired writer, said in part, “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...” In First Corinthians 11 Paul also addressed the subject of the Supper. In every instance of the partaking of the Lord's Supper, we have no authority of any apostle, or first century Christian, partaking of the Lord's Supper more than once on the Lord's Day. This is significant in that without divine authority we would be adding to the Word of God (cf. Rev. 22:18) by partaking more often than commanded. We also worship in song and prayer on Wednesday night. Both are worship, but we are not authorized to partake of the Supper every time we come together to worship. We well remember in the late 1940s and mid 1950s that there were many all day services on the Lord's Day, but never was the Lord's Supper partaken of more than once by anyone. In Acts 20 Paul preached until midnight, but there is no indication that the audience was eating the Supper all during this time.

We are commanded to partake on the Lord's Day. Sometimes, due to health or other legitimate reasons, one may not be able to participate with the rest of the saints in partaking of the Supper. Since it is still the Lord's Day, and we are under commandment to partake, if able, it is Scriptural for those who could not do so earlier to eat and drink the Supper at another worship service. By doing so, they fulfill the Lord's command. But partaking more than once is not commanded, and as such, is not authorized in the Scriptures. We must do all by the authority of Jesus Christ (cf. Col. 3:17).

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

Our question this month comes from interested individuals in the matter of leadership in the church, namely elders and deacons. Specifically asking “May a congregation where the eldership has been dissolved continue to have deacons?”

As usual we are thankful for this question and all questions.

In considering this question those who take this position may find some solace in Acts 6: 1-7 which reads thusly:

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

It is interesting that these were not called “deacons.” Many believe that they were the first deacons in the church but they are not called that per se. One may say there here is apostolic authority for there to be deacons where there are no elders. If this is that then we must have “seven” deacons. Look at the text. Compare this with 1 Tim. 3: 8-13 which reads,

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not

slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

There is striking difference between those in Acts 6 and those in Paul's letter to Timothy. Notice a couple of these with the writer. (1) Those in Acts 6 were not commanded to have children and thus be married. (2) Those were to be full with the Holy Spirit while those in 1 Timothy 3 were not given this charge. At least some of the seven chosen were inspired such as Stephen and Philip undoubtedly this is what part of the laying on of hands included and through the laying on of apostle's hands, the only way that spiritual gifts could be bestowed on others was through the laying on of apostles hands. This ceased when the Scriptures had become complete, But this is a different study regarding the Holy Spirit and that is not the specific question here and maybe for another time.

Inspiration was not a qualification for deacons in 1 Timothy 3 so we are back where we started.

Let's take a look at Acts 20:28 and think about elders for a moment as we study. Doctor Luke was the author of the book of Acts as he was moved by the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Pet. 2:21). He wrote, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." One of the original words for elder means one some age or very experienced—one older. You are encouraged to read their qualifications in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1: 5-11. Paul denotes in the record to Titus that the elders were to "hold fast" the word which by their qualifications were to stop the mouths of the false teachers (vs. 11). Jamieson, Faussett & Brown write about the meaning of the word elder thusly,

Elder is the term of dignity in relation to the college of presbyters; bishop points to the duties of his office in relation to the flock. From the unsound state of the Cretan Christians described here, we see the danger of the want of Church government. The appointment of presbyters was designed to check idle talk and speculation, by setting forth the "faithful word."

Deacons, nowhere in the Sacred Scriptures, had this qualification pointed out or commanded to them or of them. With that said, every Christian should be of age to refute error but we are looking at the qualifications given in the Scriptures not "ought to be's" here.

Paul wrote in Colossians 3: 17 these words, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." *In the name of* is by His authority (cf. Acts 22:16 calling of the name of the Lord) that is by His authority and not our authority. Moreover, in Paul's initial address to the church in Philippi he said, "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1). He did not say deacon without elders, but **both**.

If elders are overseers—and they are—and if there are no elders, who will oversee the

deacons? From all the evidence that the writer finds in the Scriptures, deacons are lacking the authority for there to be deacons without elders. No examples and no commands equal to this scribe that this is without divine precedent.

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

This Month's question:

I have fallen in love with a fine Christian lady, whom I desire to get married to God willing next year. However, there is this older brother in our congregation who contends that in order for a man to be happy in his marriage and gain the respect of his wife, he ought to take time, make lots of money and acquire some property of sorts before venturing into marriage. “If” says he “you allow your wife to go hungry, she would not respect you.” Thus, his solution is to wait and make a lot of money and some property. He says he's speaking from experience.

By God's grace, I have a degree in marketing (with the intention of doing further studies) and a job and I believe if we live or spend within our means, then by God's providence, we won't go hungry.

For some reason this man's view doesn't sit well with me and I'd be very grateful if as an experienced man and preacher, you could give me your views on the position of this teacher.

Thanks for your question and your patience in getting to this answer. We have several questions in the que to try to answer and we are thankful for each. We fully realize that we have had this question for sometime thanks again for understanding.

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Gen. 2:18-24).

Our Lord Jesus Christ sanctioned this arrangement when in His personal public ministry, He said, “And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he

which made them at the beginning made them male and female” (Matt. 19:4) which He took from Genesis 1:27.

Moreover, Jesus said, “And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh” (Matt. 19:5).

The word “cleave” means to hold on and not let go. Thus, marriage is to be a permanent arrangement until the death of either partner (cf. Rom. 7:1-4) or fornication, unfaithfulness to the spouse one is married to and can be Scripturally put away and another Spiritually lawful marriage be gone into.

I am sure that you know of these marriage laws of God due to the wording of your question to me. I suggested these Scriptures because they include the arrangement that God placed on marriage and not man’s advice.

Paul wrote, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). When this kind of love persists between a marriageable man and woman it meets God’s full requirement.

God never mentioned wealth! In fact, the Scriptures point out the danger of wealth.

And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich (Lu. 18: 18-23).

One command Jesus left out and that was covetousness—“Thou shalt not covet.” Possessions can, and may, rule the heart and lives of individuals. Your personal attainments are more than sufficient to be able to finance a marriage to the love of your life. Educational attainments within themselves do not guarantee and a good, happy, Scriptural, sustainable marriage.

Countless couples have gotten married who had little to no educational attainments with little to no money without the promise of much in the future. Where there is genuine love from within the hearts of both the man and woman and their determination to love each other until time is no more for them, that marriage will be successful.

The individual that is indicating things that you should do before you marry should be dismissed by you altogether. His unwanted advice may be good for himself but is not in tune with the most important thing in marriage—love, to cleave to, and hold on, and not let go. He is adding things that God never required. Furthermore, a husband and wife who respect each other completely will be successful if their delight is in the law of the Lord and that respect will only grow as time passes us by.

I wish you well in your intended marriage to the woman you love.

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

A reader asks this question:

Please does 1 Corinthians 6:16 prove that God joins people in marriage only when they “know each other?” I have heard some preach that even after the marriage ceremony, with both families consenting to the union, the newly married are not really married until they “know each other.” Please I would very much appreciate your thoughts on this.

I sincerely thank you for this question. It is not the first time nor will it be the last time that the same false claim the “know each other” mistake will be made and comes about by a misunderstanding of what Paul is and is not teaching.

Perhaps here is the background that is used: “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD” (Gen. 4:1). “And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch” (Gen. 4:17). “And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew” (Gen. 4:25).

Notice please that it is the case that Adam “knew his **wife.**” (bold added HDD) They were already married, if you please, by God. No one would argue differently. Adam knew his wife again in Gen. 4:25. Again it was his wife that he had known from the time that God made her from his side. Again, notice that Cain also “knew” his wife. She, as well as Eve were wives to Cain and Adam respectively before the conception. I am not sure why this cannot be seen by honest readers of the Scriptures. Why called *wife* if not so?

If “knowing” a woman out of wedlock—marriage—was the case then there are possibly thousands upon thousands who are married and do not know it! “How is that?” so one asks. If knowing a woman equals marriage—and it does not—then every boy and girl who have been this romantic are married in the rolling back seat of the automobile of fornication, or nowadays in the bedroom of the girl or boy. That is fornication. We should understand the terms involved. For brevity’s sake all adultery is fornication but not all fornication is adultery.

What about every man who “looketh on a woman?” Are they married or do they “know each other,” strictly speaking? Jesus said, “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:32). Was physical contact made by looking? That is not what Jesus said. Remember that all adultery is fornication but not all fornication is adultery. Think about it!!

Let’s look at the broader context of First Corinthians 6:

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (vv. 9-11).

Some of those converts had gone back into the sin that they pretended to leave behind it seems. and they are reminded that they should have left that past behind or that such works of the flesh would lead to torment.

In verse 12 we begin a section that goes all the way through chapter 10: 23. Notice that verse 12 of chapter 6 says, “All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” If you look at chapter 10:23 he says, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.” Therefore, when we look at 10:23 we understand what kind of things he is talking about. He is referring to matters of indifference or matters that do not affect morals. There must be a distinction made between moral sins and the matter of the things that he was discussing as being lawful and whether engaging in something was an expedient.

Whenever the Bible prohibits something there is no way that it can be an expedient. When the Bible commands something there is no way that we can eliminate it. Here are two things we must get in mind. Anything that is prohibited by God does not come in the realm of expediency. Anything that God has commanded does not come in the realm of expediency. Here is where we have a great deal of trouble in separating matters. Many troubles exist because there are things that come in the realm of expediency and things that have to do with faith, that is, divine things that God has commanded or prohibited.

Therefore, let me state it this way—Bible things and Bible ways. This is clearly stated and the substance of the whole. A Bible thing must be specified. A Bible way does not have to be specified. There are Bible ways of doing Bible things. This is what Paul is addressing. He is saying that something must be lawful for it to be expedient. If something is not lawful it is not expedient. Thus, he is addressing things in the area of liberty in this section. Now, it is vital that we understand that a Bible thing is that which is authorized or stated explicitly. For example, on the night of the Passover God authorized the killing of a lamb. He specified its age; it had to be without blemish. Here are Bible things! How were they to kill the lamb? Could they knock it in the head or just cut its throat? It is not specified. Thus any way they killed the lamb would be fulfilling what God had said or what God did not say. He was silent on the way the lamb was to be slain. There was also the matter of the red heifer whose ashes was mixed with water. Why a red heifer instead of a white heifer? When God specified the kind no other could substitute for it. There is a difference between something that is a Bible thing and a Bible way. Therefore, this section deals with matters of liberty.

Another thing to keep in mind as we study this section is that Corinth was a pagan, idolatrous city. What went on there was as pagan and immoral as could be found

anywhere. The worship of Venus took place in Corinth. There was a temple where such worship went on. In this worship there was fornication or prostitution that was practiced in pagan worship. Here are people who had been living in this pagan city. The eating of the meat of the sacrifice that was offered, and the matter of fornication was not only approved by the people, but was practiced in areas of worship. Paul used the children of Israel as an example in 1 Cor. 10:7-8: "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand." If you go back to Numbers 24 you will read about how Balaam tried to get Balac to lead the nation of Israel into sin. That is exactly what they let happen. Pagan worship was practiced, but pagan worship and fornication were tied together and this has a bearing on what was happening in Corinth.

It is in this context that Paul wrote verse 15: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid." Here, in my judgment, is the gist of verse 15. From this passage on down indicates that the sin of fornication differs from all other sins. I may not be able to explain all of that, but it is quite clear from this passage that while other sins may be committed with the body fornication is a sin against the body. Proverbs 6:30-32:

Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry;
But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance
of his house. But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding;
he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.

Even the book of Proverbs shows that while stealing is a sin and fornication is a sin that there is something about fornication that is different from the sin of stealing. It is true that a man that stole and did not repent would be lost, but this shows there is a difference between the two. Why does it read the way it does if there is not a distinction in some way about how that fornication is a sin against one's own body and is the worst sin that a man can commit? This is what Paul is saying in 1 Cor. 6. You will not read this in the morning newspaper. This is the only place that will give us specific teaching anywhere regarding this. It is so contrary to what the world believes and practices today. I would like to emphasize that **any sin** not repented of will cause one to be lost regardless of what it may be. Sin is sin! We realize this but there may be consequences that are much different.

Verse 16 given at the top of this piece shows that there is a difference between marriage and committing fornication here there is one similarity. Paul quotes from Genesis 2 and the union that is formed.

Let us now look at verse 17: "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." Let us go back to Romans 6 and look at some things there. In Romans 6:1 people wanted to know if they should sin more that grace might abound. He showed that those who had obeyed the Gospel should not live any longer in sin. Notice the word "live." This indicates a habitual practice. This comes about by weakness and we do not strive to not live in sin. Those baptized into Christ were baptized into His death. We are not only brought in relationship to His death—His death becomes ours. It is there that we

appropriate all that was invested in that death—that is the cross.

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

We should not serve sin. When one becomes a penitent believer he resolves to break with the life of sin. We are dying with Christ thus a union is made with Christ. Realizing this we are not our own. We have another master. We leave behind a world of wrong. Out in the world there is an empty seat. If we have not become dead to sin then the seat is still filled. We must leave the world—that seat becoming empty and take up our abode with Christ. Obeying the Gospel is not just a form. There is a reality that takes place. We are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. A change takes place. We are not going to think, act or live like we used to because a change has taken place. A change in our values has taken place. We value things that are noble and righteous.

Look at 1 Cor. 6:11 and following again. They had obeyed the Gospel and were washed, sanctified, and justified. They now belonged to Christ. They were to leave the world behind. They were different, but some had not come to appreciate that. We turn ourselves over—even our bodies—to the service of the Lord. In Romans 12 Paul said to present your bodies a living sacrifice. The flesh cannot have dominion over us and this is why fornication is the worst sin that a Christian can commit. He takes a body that belongs to Christ and makes it one with a harlot. Keep in mind that Corinth was a pagan city, but that does not change the Scriptures. They had been surrounded by immorality. In obeying the Gospel there were things that they learned. These matters were related to the immediate situation.

Probably less than a hundred years ago a man and a woman decided to start living together and they were one at that point in time. There was and still may be in some states of what is called a "common law" marriage. I have known individuals in the past who did this. They were recognized as married before they ever "knew" each other in that sense.

Today, most states have marriage laws that must be met before people are married and these laws must be kept. Christians are citizens of two kingdoms in effect—civil and spiritual.

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

“A friend of mine has been reading a book written by C.R. Nichol entitled, *God's Woman*, of which he sent excerpts to me. C.R. Nichol, in the book, advocated the office of the deaconess and said 1 Timothy 3:11 were qualifications of deaconesses in the first century. He wrote,

At verse eleven, before he had concluded the discussion of the qualifications of deacons, he says, 'Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.' Having made this statement found in verse eleven, he immediately returns to the discussion of the character of those who serve as deacons. Has this question occurred to you: 'Why did Paul turn from the discussion of the deacon, make the observation found in the verse about women, and then return to the discussion of the deacons?' It has been thought by some that Paul had reference to the 'wives' of the deacons in the passage we now study ...If you hold that view, you are confronted with the question: 'Why is it that Paul makes reference to the wives of the deacons, making certain qualifications necessary for one to be a deacon, when in the same connection he had been discussing the bishops, but make no reference to the qualifications of the wife of a man who could be a bishop?'

We appreciate the statement and question above that was sent to Jerry Brewer, owner, publisher and editor of *The Gospel Preceptor*.

In 1965, when our family moved to work with a congregation in Pope County Arkansas, one of the elders in the congregation, had been a moderator for C.R Nichol all across south Texas and spoke of them riding trains together to various debates in which Nichol was a participant. He related to me some of the many challenges that the duo had together. The elder was by no means the moderator for all the Nichol debates. He opined:

We had heard of brother Nichol but that was more of an introduction to the man and the preacher than I had had the privilege to know and understand and we came to appreciate his work even more and the many spiritual battles he had presenting God's Divine Inspired Word. Men such as Nichol made it so much easier for those of us today that follow the road after them. They had very meager finances often working with their own hands that would enable them to preach the Gospel.

We did not know that Nichol wrote the book alluded to above. We are sure it is/was an interesting profitable volume though we have not, of course, perused its pages.

Since the question is found in 1 Tim. 3 and involves the leadership of the church and deacons in particular, let us read the context. Having given the qualifications of the elders (overseers) of the church Paul continued:

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus (Verses 8-13).

The question is not about the qualifications of either elders or deacons but of "wives"

and who is under consideration. Elders are overseers of the flock—the Lord’s church (cf. Acts 20:28). They have certain qualifications to attain to in order to be qualified to serve.

On the other hand, deacons have certain qualifications to meet before they can scripturally serve the church where they worship. As we read those qualifications, we observe that there are more strict qualifications for elders than deacons. Deacons are not the overseers. Since that is the case, it seems strange to me that deacons’ wives must have qualifications and the elder’s wives do not have according to the text of verse 11.

We know that an injudicious wife may mar the work of her husband as he attempts to serve the Lord either as an elder or deacon. It is also interesting that the Revised version uses the phrase “Women must be.” Since that is the case why would that not be both the wives of elders and deacons? Adam Clarke says “Whatever is spoken here becomes women in general.”

If brother Nichol held the position stated at the beginning of this question then I must disagree with him on this point. I believe that this is talking about women in general and the wives of elders and deacon in particular.

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

The question this month is: **“If we have guardian angels protecting us and also protecting us from bad angels, why does God allow harm to come to us?”**

Thanks so much for this question that was sent originally to our editor, Jerry Brewer. Of course, the question assumes that there are angels today for which assumption there is no proof. The study is longer than we have editorial room to cite every case that we could use in investigation.

The history of *angel* or *angels* starts in Genesis 16:7 with this phrase “And the angel of the LORD...” There almost 200 such passages and almost 100 times that these words are used in the Holy Text of God’s eternal Word. Concurrent with the phrase the “angel of the Lord” is the “angel of God.”

Adam Clarke correctly comments on these passages this way:

That Jesus Christ, in a body suited to the dignity of his nature, frequently appeared to the patriarchs, has been already intimated. That the person mentioned here was greater than any created being is sufficiently evident from the following particulars: 1. From his promising to perform what God alone could do, and foretelling what God alone could know; "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly," &c., Ge 16:10; "Thou art with child, and shalt bear a son," &c., Ge 16:11; "He will be a wild man," &c., Ge 16:12. All this shows a pre-science which is proper to God alone.

In reference to Hagar in Genesis 16, she completely understood that this was something only God could and would do, for she said, “And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me” (Gen. 16:13).

The fundamental meaning of the word angel is “messenger”. *Angel* is found over 90 times in the Old Testament and almost every time the angel is described as “an angel of the Lord, angel of God” or “Mine angel” in reference to either God or the Lord. It was an angel of the Lord that spoke to Balaam that both the donkey and Balaam saw. “Angels” in the plural sense is used 19 times in the Old testament and again, staying with the context, they were angels of the Lord or of God.

In the New Testament, Matthew 1:20, we find this terminology: “But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost”. On and on these expressions are used wherein an angel of the Lord appeared in a burning bush (cf. Exod. 3:1-10, Acts 7: 30), opened prison doors (cf. Acts 5:19), an angel smote and commanded (cf. Acts 12:7, 8), and an angel of God stood by Paul (cf. Acts 27:23). All these things are not meant to be exclusive but rather a digest of the usage of and descriptions of angels' work in Bible times.

We do not know the names of all the angels. They were servants—messengers—of God assigned a task to carry out, like a message to be delivered, like giving instructions etc. Angels were made free moral agents in that they could choose to obey the Lord or not. Some left their first estate and fell away from God through their wish to not serve God faithfully (Jude 1:6; 2 Pet. 2:4).

On 2 Peter 2:4 where Peter wrote: “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment,” Albert Barnes commented this way:

The apostle now proceeds to the proof of the proposition that these persons would be punished. It is to be remembered that they had been, or were even then, professing Christians, though they had really, if not in form, apostatized from the faith, (2 Pet. 2:20-22;) and a part of the proofs, therefore, are derived from the cases of those who had apostatized from the service of God. He appeals, therefore, to the case of the angels that had revolted. Neither their former rank, their dignity, nor their holiness, saved them from being thrust down to hell; and if God punished them so severely, then false teachers could not hope to escape. The apostle, by the angels here, refers undoubtedly to a revolt in heaven—an event referred to in Jude 1:6, and everywhere implied in the Scriptures. When that occurred, however—why they revolted, or what was the number of the apostates—we have not the slightest information, and on these points conjecture would be useless. In the supposition that it occurred, there is no improbability; for there is nothing more absurd in the belief that angels have revolted than that men have; and if there are evil angels, as there is no more reason to doubt than that there are evil men, it is morally certain that they must have fallen at some period from a state of ho-

liness, for it cannot be believed that God made them wicked.

From all the evidence in God's Holy Word, angels were used in various ways before all of revelation—the revealing of the Bible was complete, and there is no evidence that they were used after its completion. There is nothing new to be revealed. God's Word saves today through the gospel (Rom. 1:16) that comes about through preaching by individuals—not angels. No angel ever told one what to do to be saved even the Lord Himself did not tell anyone what to do to be saved such as Saul of Tarsus who was told where to find a preacher (cf. Acts 8).

All these things prove that angels today are no more than a folly in the fervent imagination of the mind of man. What need would we have that the Bible does not address? Please think about this!

We do learn from the evidence herein presented that if angels—messengers of God could fall, then surely man can also (Gal. 5:4: 2 Pet. 2:4). Many religious groups believe that one cannot fall from grace or from the faith regardless of what sins one commits and that argument would put us above the angelic host of the Almighty God!

We neither have bad or good guardian angels today. There is no scriptural evidence of such. For a moment think about a terrible accident. If we have guardian angels today, did that angel go to sleep and let us have the accident? Or, did a bad angel take charge and cause the accident? Either notion is foolish to say the least and without Scriptural support. Things sometimes happen by the choice that we or others around us make like a drunken driver can take someone's life by the choice he made to drink alcohol or take dope. Bad things happen but that is not put before us by angels but by choices that we or others make.

Finally, listen to the Hebrews writer: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb 1:1-2) and Jesus is so far above the angels of God for angels of God were commanded to worship the Lord (Heb. 1: 4-6). There are no guardian angels today either good or bad. Thanks for the question.