

## COMING TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH (THROUGH PARTICIPATION)

We are continuing to hammer away on the meaning of the last verse in the passage of 2 Tim. 3:1-7. This passage deals with perilous times in the last days. A telling characteristic of the deceivers and the deceived is that they are *"ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."* In this article we want to focus on how participation helps us come to the knowledge of the truth.

First, consider the following three statements together: (1) I hear, I forget. (2) I see, I remember. (3) I do, I understand! Do you see what is implied? We can listen and observe and increase our knowledge, but there is something about experience that takes knowledge to a higher level called understanding. That is why participation is so critical to our coming to the knowledge of the truth.

The second idea is that participation often brings us to an "AHA! Moment." This is the moment when we come to understand what someone else has been trying to tell us. Here is my own personal example: Once for my birthday my dad gave me a tool like I'd never used before. I thanked him for it, but honestly didn't know what I'd do with it. A few years later I was working on my truck and needed something to remove a stuck part. After digging through all my tools, that tool that Dad gave me years before was the one that worked. All of a sudden I thought, "AHA! That's what that tool was for!" This is exactly what participation will do for us. After a while of putting God's ideas to work in our lives, we'll come to the "AHA! Moment" that these ideas really work! Imagine that.

### OBSERVATIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Abraham's test was to act: In Gen 22:10-12 we find the conclusion of the test of Abraham's fear of God. God had asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac as a burnt offering. Abraham went so far as to bind Isaac, lay him on the wood on the altar, and take the knife in his hand to slay his son. Then the angel of the Lord stopped him. The angel's words are very revealing, *"now I know that you fear God."* It was Abraham's actions - his participation - that truly revealed his fear and obedience of God.

Israel 's test of bread: While wandering between Egypt and Canaan, the children of Israel complained about the hunger. God said he would give them bread, but only to gather what they would each eat one day at a time until the sixth day. Then they would gather twice as much because there would be no bread given on the seventh day. God said he was rationing bread to them this way to "prove" them (Ex. 16:4). What a subtle, yet powerful, test of participation! Imagine hungry people being given access to an unlimited amount of food, yet being told to only gather one day's portion at a time. They had to trust that God would deliver the bread the next day, just like we all have to do even now - trust God to deliver each day.

Not all participation involves action: I imagine you are getting the idea that participation means we've got to get out and do something. Yes, but that is not all it means. Sometimes it means not doing something, as in not being excessively worried. In Phil 4:6 we are told to "Be careful for nothing.." This does not mean to be without concern, but to be without excessive worry and anxiety. To actively obey, that is to participate in, this doctrine we must not do the worrying thing. Yet how many Christians talk about worry, as if it's to their credit to be worried?

Not all action is sanctified participation: In Mat. 15:8,9 Jesus tells of those who were actively participating in worshipping him, but in the wrong way. They were even teaching, but it was the commandments of men instead of the commandments of God. So Jesus clearly leaves us an example that we must participate correctly as his servants to do him, or us, any good.

#### SOMETIMES PARTICIPATION MEANS NOT DOING\_

Consider the following examples which show again that sometimes the stronger participation means not actively participating in something that is wrong.

We are to withdraw from the disorderly: 2 Thes. 3:6 gives a hard test to those who would like to please and fellowship everybody. This verse tells us to "withdraw from every brother that walks disorderly." It's hard enough for most people to participate in evangelizing and winning souls, but this participation in withdrawing is even harder. A person would surely need to be educated and have meditated much before they try to participate in this requirement.

We are not to company with the disobedient: 2 Thes. 3:14 again speaks of active participation in non-participation. This time the command is not to company with one who did not obey Paul's epistle. Again, it takes a high level of participation and truly to have come to the knowledge of the truth to purposely not be a friend to a misbehaving brother. But we must realize it's for his, and our, own good in the long run.

We are to put off bad things in our own selves: This one is very personal to each of us. In Col. 3:5-10 we are given two lists of things in which we are not to participate. The first list is of "big" obvious sins, like fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, etc. The second list is more subtle, more private, containing things like anger, malice, not being completely truthful, etc. These are things a person might hide in his heart, or at least think he has them hidden. The harder test of participation here may be in not doing the bad, private things.

#### ALL PARTICIPATION MUST BE WORTHY

Of course, participation does mainly imply doing something, so we must make sure that what we commit our time and talents to do is worthy. Let's see what the scriptures say.

Our walk must be worthy of God: 1 Thes. 2:11-12 gives Paul's exhortation, as a father to his children, to "walk worthy of God." So while we are pitiful humans and nothing compared to the wonder of God, yet we can still choose to do Godly things. In this respect we can participate in worldly things in a way that will give God the glory, so that our actions are worthy.

Our walk must be worthy of the Lord: Study the context of Col. 1:9-10 and you will see that the term Lord refers to Jesus Christ and not God. So this verse tells us we can and must walk worthy of the one that came to earth, devoted himself to teaching, suffered the rejection of those he came to save, then sacrificed himself on the cross. How can we walk worthy of that? Only by participating in this life in everything we think and do as with the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5). If we sit back and say we can't, then we are right. But if we stand up and say with God's grace I can, then we will!

Our walk is to be honest even toward outsiders: In 1 Thes. 4:11-12 we are exhorted to "walk honestly toward them that are without." In everything we do and say in this world, realize that participation in this life as a Christian is the ultimate

end in itself and not just some sort of lip service while we pursue the excitement of our hobbies.

#### WE MUST PARTICIPATE TO LEARN

Let's consider the way even Jesus and Paul learned, and close with an exhortation to ourselves.

Christ learned obedience through his suffering: Heb. 5:8 gives a principle that is hard for me to comprehend. This teaches us that we will have to suffer to learn, also. But we will only learn if we fully participate in our suffering, both physically and mentally, to learn our lessons.

Paul learned to be content through bad experiences: Paul endured many hardships, but through them all he learned how to be content (Phil. 4:11-13). Money, health, and family bring periods of contentment, but sufferings will bring contentment that will go with us to the grave. What would Paul have learned if he had not participated in his suffering - if he had avoided them or bitterly complained while enduring? Nothing worthwhile, and probably would have only added to the misery of his companions.

We learn through our tribulations: If Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had to suffer to learn, and if Paul, the divinely appointed and inspired apostle, had to suffer to learn, then how could we think we will come to the knowledge of the truth without our own suffering? In Rom 5:3-5 Paul predicts human tribulations, and gives us the proper attitude of participation. We must participate with the attitude of glorying in our tribulations. Whining and complaining about our tribulations will not inspire but make those around us make those around us miserable.

I pray that you will study the thoughts of this article and embrace them. It is my utmost desire that each of you will experience an "AHA! Moment" in coming to the knowledge of the truth and then participate in spreading the good news so someone you love can have their "AHA! Moment," too!

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## APOLOGIA

**QUESTION:** What does it mean when the Bible tells us that God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble?

**ANSWER:** The passage alluded to is found in I Peter 5:5. This verse is a segment of a larger portion of scripture that must also be considered in order to effectively understand the great magnitude of the statement and its import in our Christian life. In I Peter 5:5-7 we read,

*"Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."* (NKJV)

It is interesting that Peter includes the statement under consideration with an admonition to submit to those older as well as to one another, and ultimately to God. The reason that such occurs is that one who is prideful will not submit to anyone but self!

The subject of humility is not a very popular one today. In order to be humble we must esteem others greater than self. This concept is opposed by pride. Pride is the idea that it is self that matters and not others. Sin is hostile to God and always seeks to promote self by removing God and His will and placing oneself upon the throne. This is what God resists and opposes while accepting those of humble spirit.

We will begin by pointing out that this passage shows us that humility is absolutely essential to living the Christian life. A close examination of the passage reveals three things that indicate the seriousness of possessing humility.

The first is where the younger are admonished to submit themselves to the elder. The concept of submission conveys the meaning to obey or subordinate oneself to another. This cannot be accomplished without humility. In order to submit to another, one must be humble toward the one to which they submit.

The second place humility comes in is in the command given to all, that we clothe ourselves with humility. This means that we possess a lowly mind esteeming others better than ourselves.

The third instance is the plain command to humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. We must be lowly when we deal with the Great God of heaven.

The main point of these three verses is that humility is the center of the Christian life. It is a defining characteristic of being a child of God.

Further analysis also shows that there are several reasons that humility is a necessary trait.

The first is that God is opposed to the proud. By "the proud" the scripture means one who considers themselves above others, including God.

We also note that God gives grace to the humble. Grace is unmerited favor and the statement shows it is only given to those who understand their place.

The third thing to note is that when we are humble God will exalt us at the proper time. Those who seek to exalt self will never be exalted while those who humble themselves will be exalted!

The fourth reason that humility plays such an important part of the Christian life is that it is the key to God's help. When we are humble in our hearts God allows us to cast all our care upon Him because He cares for us.

The question that should concern us is "Are we clothed with humility or are we lifted up with pride?" Since sin is so deceitful and it is possible to be prideful and not realize it, we believe it is important to examine ourselves and see which best describes us. In an article read recently we came across some defining traits associated with pride. We will adopt these here in the form of questions that the reader can answer.

1. Are you self-satisfied? Prideful people are. When we are driven by a desire to have our way and when we have it we have great contentment. Thus we are seeking our own satisfaction. This is an indicator of pride.
2. Do you value self-sufficiency and self-reliance? Both of these sound like wonderful things. In fact our society esteems both. But for the child of God we are to only find sufficiency in God. He is the one upon whom we must rely.

3. Do you value instruction from others? Prideful people resent any instruction about matters. They feel that they do not need advice or counsel from others and are actually offended when reproved.
4. Do you obey or are you insubordinate? Do you find yourself saying things like "I know that I should... But"? Are there things you know you need to change but haven't? If so, then you are prideful seeking your own will and not God's.
5. Do you like receiving honor and praise? Do you do things for the accolade of men? This is another sign of pride.
6. Do you trust in God or do you think that your situation is to be handled solely by you? Pride cannot trust God for anything. One of the great causes of anxiety is pride. We get anxious because we want to be in control and are not but we do not trust God to deliver either!

As we can see God truly resists those of proud spirits and receives those that are humble. This passage on humility is followed by the exhortation that we "*Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.*" (I Pet. 5:8 NKJV)

It is interesting that after a discussion on pride and humility that we are warned of the devil's activity. Pride is the invitation to the devil to take our hearts. Satan has from the beginning sought to turn man from God by having us turn our attention upon ourselves. In short, it is all about me!

Satan has done his work well. But here in the midst of the darkness is a passage that shines forth as the sun calling us to turn from self and turn to God. To resist the prideful spirit that wars against the soul. Let us each humble ourselves in His sight!

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# GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
Oct. 7 – 10	Noble Congregation Noble, GA	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Oct. 7 – 14	Spring Valley Congregation Xenia, Ohio, just west of Highway 42	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
Oct. 11 – 14	Goochtown Congregation Near Eubank, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY) & Danny Grider (Somerset, KY)
Oct. 15 – 19	Oak Grove Congregation Eubank, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Oct. 15 – 19	Deane Congregation Deane, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
Oct. 18 – 21	Marrowbone Congregation Burkesville, KY	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
Oct. 19 – 21	Mount Carmel Road Congregation Gay, GA	Ronnie Scott (Bloomington, IN)
Oct. 26 – 28	Napoleon Congregation Woodland, AL	Brad Prince (Wedowee, AL) & Chad Prince (Oxford, AL)
Oct. 26 – 28	Winchester Congregation Winchester, Ohio	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What city was built by Omri, when he was king of Israel?
2. What did the prophet Hosea say that the people asked counsel from?
3. According to Mark's account, what did the disciples do on the Sabbath that the Pharisees said was unlawful?



4. In Romans, Paul said he was from what tribe?
5. What did James describe as "a fire, a world of iniquity?"

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. What did Isaac and the herdsmen of Gerar quarrel over in the Valley of Gerar? WATER (Gen. 26:20)
2. What did Boaz give Ruth to take back to Naomi? BARLEY (Ruth 3:15-17)
3. To whom was Isaiah's first prophecy directed? JUDAH (Isa. 1:1)
4. According to Luke, Jesus went into the synagogue on the Sabbath and was handed the book of which prophet? ISAIAH (Luke 4:17)
5. What did the church at Thessalonica turn to God from? IDOLS (1 Thes. 1:9)