

COMMON DELUSIONS

You have probably seen TV shows or read books in which a character stranded in the desert begins to imagine that he sees a beautiful spring of water off in the distance. This occurrence is called a mirage. Like mirages, delusions are things that seem to be there but really are not. They may make sense in our world but are not spiritually correct. A delusion can also be defined as a false belief or opinion – a belief in something contrary to fact resulting from deception. *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Pro. 14:12). Here is a list of man's common delusions:

1. Thinking that sin will give fullness of life. Are you missing something in your life? Do you feel like you have to walk on the wild side to feel complete? Consider Adam and Eve.

"But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." (Gen. 3:3-6)

Sowing wild oats will not make us better, and experiencing evil does not improve life.

2. Trusting in social connections for salvation. Abraham's descendants would always point to him for their righteousness. *"And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham"* (Matt. 3:9).

We must work out our own salvation (Phil. 2:12). We cannot rely on family, ancestors, or friends.

3. Using vain repetitions in prayer. Some always pray the same prayer; some say the Lord's prayer verbatim. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus said, *"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking"* (Matt. 6:7).

The keyword in this passage is "vain". Jesus in Gethsemane

prayed the same prayer three times. *"And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words"* (Matt. 26:44).

4. Having too much self-confidence. Are you thinking too highly of yourself? Perhaps you are perfect and infallible, unable to stumble? Peter had this problem. *"Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended"* (Matt. 26:33). Shortly thereafter, he denied three times that he knew Jesus.

"For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." (Gal. 6:3)

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10:12)

5. Building on the sand. Perhaps you think that the foundation is not important. *"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it"* (Matt. 7:26-27).

Although the house itself may be strong, the foundation is important too! We may have good intentions, good ideas, good thoughts, and good sense, but if it is not based on God's Word, it will fall like the house upon the sand.

6. Trusting in earthly riches. Some people think money can buy everything. Have you ever heard anyone say, "If I won the lottery..." The rich fool in Luke 12:19 said, *"And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."* And in the next verse, *"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"*

Wealth is fleeting, like the flowers and the grass. *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"* (Matt. 6:19-21).

7. Thinking that God is represented by idols. In the old days, men worshiped idols and statues. To refute this practice, Paul on Mars' Hill said, *"Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold,*

or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts 17:29).

Today, idols may be things such as lucky charms, a rabbit's foot, a 4-leaf clover, and even personal psychics who claim to be a "pipeline to God."

8. Thinking that there is plenty of time. For the young there seems to be plenty of time – death is the last thing on their minds. They reason, "I'll sin now and repent later." What if "later" never comes?

Felix delayed responding to the gospel. *"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25).* Did this "convenient season" ever come for Felix? The Bible does not hold any further record of it.

9. Presuming upon unchanging conditions. "Tomorrow will be the same. The sun will rise as always, and I'll go to work as usual." However, the Scriptures tell us, *"Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow" (Jas. 4:13-14a).*

Life is brief and uncertain – things will change. This earth will not last forever, and Christ will come again!

The conclusion is this: We need to quit deceiving ourselves. We need to quit being taken in by the delusions of this world.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7:21-23)

We are all sinners, and we need salvation. We can't save ourselves. We need God's help. We need the blood of Christ.

Adapted from a sermon by RAY MCMANUS
(Deceased)

APOLOGIA

QUESTION: We are warned in the Scriptures of the effect of false teachers and our duty toward them and their heresies. We are also warned about being divisive and gendering strife. How do we strike a healthy balance between the two?

ANSWER: This is an excellent question. It is clear that we are to be bold in confronting error and not tolerate any deviation from God's truth. On the other hand we are also warned about wrangling about matters that are profitless and useless questions that gender strife and cause problems. It is indeed a challenge to be able to determine when an issue is one we must defend and one that we might discuss but not do so in a divisive way.

In our society today the idea seems to be that if we want to reach unbelievers we must be less militant, less aggressive, and less preachy. We often hear comments that we should spend more time on discussing the need for genuine love than condemning sin. The fallacy here is that to preach the love of God without condemning sin will only result in people believing that they can persist in a life of sin, and God will accept it. This is not true of course, and the preaching of the cross necessitates that we begin with sin so that the work of Jesus on the cross will make sense. Unless one realizes that they are lost they will not understand the work of redemption and reconciliation.

Another thing we note is that many in the church have been influenced into thinking that if we are to be effective in evangelism, we must not come across as being absolutely sure about our own convictions. We are encouraged to sound apologetic for what we believe concerning Christ and His plan to save us. The philosophical mindset of our time is that truth is subjective and unknowable. Therefore to come across as being sure of anything is to be considered dogmatic and narrow-minded. Just remember that our culture is highly sophisticated, but as pertaining to truth it is certainly challenged.

We must realize that as God's people we are not here to conform to the world but rather we are to transform it. This happens as we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. In Romans 12:1-2, we read, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"* (NKJV).

Note that we are not to conform to the mindset of the world or culture in which we live, but rather we are to change our thinking by constantly exposing ourselves to God's truth. When we do this we then impact the unbelieving world by demonstrating to them God's good, acceptable, and perfect will.

It is important, however, to maintain balance by keeping a proper perspective as it pertains to confrontation and defending the truth. Not every disagreement is an opening for combat or harsh words. In fact many issues are petty and should not be allowed to gender strife. Such things as personal conflicts, debates about unclear matters or disputes about semantics are not to be engaged.

As an example consider Paul's instructions to Timothy when he was left at Ephesus after Paul's departure, that he should charge certain men to teach no other doctrine. In 1 Timothy 1:3-4, we read, *"As I urged you when I went into Macedonia remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith"* (NKJV).

The instructions were twofold. First to defend the true doctrine and second to stop fighting about issues that do not edify. He is calling for balance.

However, the correct question at this point is how do we know? What may be one person's opinion might be taken by another as a matter of faith. How can we determine when a disagreement is petty or truly weighty? The answer is Biblical Wisdom. We must learn what is fundamental to our faith. We will now turn our attention to some guidelines that should help assist us in determining those issues that demand we fight the good fight of faith.

All fundamental issues worth contending for come from Scripture. The Word of God is complete in informing us of everything that we need to know. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Paul writes, *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (NKJV).

In essence, this verse is telling us that everything we need to know to be complete and equipped for serving God is found in Scripture. Therefore we conclude that if one wrangles over an issue that is not from Scripture, one is being divisive. Those things that come from Scripture must at all costs be defended.

Too many times people have divided on opinions rather than on what the Scripture says. For example I know brethren that have made the translation one uses an issue of fellowship. I find it interesting that the Scripture is silent on this subject and yet we withdraw over the translation issue. The Bible does not tell us what translation of the Word we should use, therefore to withhold fellowship from others who do not agree with another's opinion is exactly what Paul forbade.

Fundamental issues are also clear in Scripture and not obscure. For example the statement "repent and be baptized for the remission of sins" from Acts 2:38 is clear in what it demands of us to do. Therefore there can be no compromising on this statement.

Fundamental issues also include everything to saving faith. In Hebrews 11:6 we find that without faith it is impossible to please God. Therefore everything that God has asked of us to receive His Son and the redemption that He has offered is of utmost importance.

Fundamental issues also include everything that God states we cannot deny. For example if we deny that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh then we are doing that which God says we must not do. If we have not the Son then we have not the Father (1 John 2:23).

These are but a few guiding principles and are not meant to be an exhaustive list. These should help us as we seek what issues to defend and which ones to avoid. Perhaps in a future article we will delve deeper into this matter.

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GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES

PLACE

SPEAKER

August
6 – 8

Freefield
State Line, MS

Harry Cobb
(Wedowee, AL)

August
13 – 15

San Angelo
San Angelo, TX

Wayne Moore
(Newnan, GA) &
Harry Cobb
(Wedowee, AL)

August 13 – 15	Willow Oaks Russell Springs, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
August 20 – 22	Dowell Hill Columbus, IN	Danny Abercrombie (Gay, GA)
August 20 – 22	Fayetteville Road Fairburn, GA	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
August 20 – 22	Pleasant Ridge Woodbury, TN	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
August 26 – 29	Ashlock Near Celina, TN	Hunter Bulger (Fort Deposit, AL)
August 27 – 29	Verona Verona, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
August 27 – 29	Mount Carmel Road Gay, GA	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. When God first spoke to Samuel, what did His message concern?
2. According to Solomon's writings in Proverbs, mercy and truth should be what?
3. God told Ezekiel that which three men delivered themselves by their righteousness?
4. What three animals were being sold in the temple when Jesus drove out the vendors?
5. In Paul's letter to the Romans, Paul said that the gospel is the power of God to salvation to which two people?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember the questions from June's issue?

1. When the Amalekites attacked the Israelites at Rephidim, upon what was the Israelite victory dependent? MOSES RAISING HIS HANDS (Exo. 17:11)

2. What frustrated Ezra so much that he tore his garment and plucked hair from his head and beard? THE FACT THAT MANY OF THE JEWS HAD INTERMARRIED (Ezra 9:1-3)
3. What city did Hosea say would bury the Israelites? MEMPHIS (Hos. 9:6)
4. What did Paul assure Timothy that all who desire to live godly in Christ will experience? PERSECUTION (2 Tim. 3:12)
5. In the book of Revelation, after the fifth angel sounded his trumpet and the bottomless pit was opened, what emerged from the smoke? LOCUSTS (Rev. 9:3)