

It Is Written

*A weekly publication of the
Junction Highway church of Christ in Kerrville, TX.
Vol. 8 September 6, 2026 No. 36*

I Understand, But I Have My Own Ideas

By Jefferson David Tant

While talking with a young woman I had several Bible studies with, I asked whether she had read something I had given her. Her reply was, "Yes, and I understand, but I have my own ideas." Hers is not an uncommon reaction when discussing what the Bible teaches. This kind of thinking goes back thousands of years, to our origins in the Garden of Eden.

When Satan approached Eve concerning what fruit she could eat, she showed she clearly understood what God said. "The woman said to the serpent, 'From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die'" (Genesis 3:2-3). She understood, but then Satan convinced her that it made no difference. So even though she understood, she was convinced "her own ideas" were just as good as what God had said. We know the tragic consequences.

In just the next generation, we have the story of Cain and Abel. They both offered sacrifices to the Lord, but God rejected Cain's sacrifice, which caused him to be angry and kill his brother. "But for Cain and for his offering (God) had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell... And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him" (Genesis 4:5, 8). Had Cain understood what God's requirements were? The answer is yes. "By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain" (Hebrews 11:4). How did Abel have "faith" to offer a "better sacrifice"? His faith came from hearing God's command. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). Cain would have received the same word that Abel did. The clear implication of this is that although Cain understood what God had said, he "had his own ideas." And he suffered for it.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' declares Jehovah. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts'" (Isaiah 55:8-9). This is a lesson all need to learn. No matter how smart we think we are, nor how reasonable our thoughts and ideas seem to be, we are not God! He knows what He wants, and why He wants certain things. The only way to know the mind of God is by reading what He has told us. The only way we can please Him is to obey His word.

Jeremiah emphasizes the point: "I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). We tread on dangerous ground when we think we know better than God. Christ warns us about which way to go. "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). Why do so many go the "broad way?" Is it not because they have "their own ideas?" Christ further emphasizes the "narrow way" in Matthew 7:21-23: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

Note that those who were rejected thought they were doing right. They had their "own ideas," but Christ said they were practicing "lawlessness," i.e., things that were not authorized. We must always respect God's thoughts and ways above our own ideas. To do otherwise elevates our own wisdom above God's wisdom and invites disaster.

Where Do We Find New Converts?

By Greg Gwin

A survey of several churches of Christ turned up some interesting statistics about the people who are being converted to Christ.

Some things didn't seem to matter much. For instance, there were about equal numbers of men and women who became Christians. And people from different races were represented in percentages that aren't far different than the general population.

The age of new converts showed an interesting trend. The highest percentages were among men and women from 20 to 40 years old. And among these, the highest numbers were for married people. This should tell us that we ought to be especially targeting young married people with the gospel message.

The second largest age group for converts was for those under 20 years old. Most of these were children of existing members. This is an extremely important group, and we should never fail to pay special attention to the conversion of our 'own' children.

Without a doubt, the most strikingly obvious statistic is that new converts are, by far, most often among people who are friends or relatives of those who are already Christians. In fact, a look at the numbers shows that fully 80% of conversions are among those that we already know. Only 4% were reached by advertising efforts, and just 1% contacted by door-to-door work.

What does this tell us? It's clear that we need to be working hard to teach and convert our own family members, our friends and co-workers, our neighbors and other acquaintances. 4 out of every 5 conversions are likely to come from these folks who are already known to us. And yet we continue to target people we don't know with ads and door knocking. Let's change that. Let's get more efficient. Let's work energetically to teach and convert as many as we can – especially those we already know.

Standing for the Truth Without Being Obnoxious

By David Gibson

Firm but Kind

God expects Christians to take a firm stand on morals and doctrine. But how can we do this without unnecessarily closing doors?

"The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth ..." (II Timothy 2:24-25).

Kindness, patience, gentleness, and humility keep us from coming across as abrasive, arrogant, holier-than-thou know-it-alls.

A Lifestyle that Changes Minds

People quickly notice whether we practice what we preach (I Timothy 6:1; Titus 2:9-10; I Peter 2:15; 3:1-2, 15-16).

Also, good deeds make the truth attractive (Matthew 5:16; I Peter 2:12). Even unbelievers can't help but be impressed when they see believers actively involved in Christ-like deeds of compassionate service to those in need.

With this approach, we may win a soul for Christ!
And won't that make it all worthwhile?