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JUST HOW IMPORTANT ARE 'THE RIGHT DOCTRINES'?

In the past 10 years the Worldwide Church of God has changed all of the major doctrines of the Church. Because of those doctrinal changes we have left WCG. But this raises some questions:

Just how important is it to have the right doctrines? What is God looking for ... a Church that has all the right teachings? Are correct teachings the most important thing? Or is there something that is even more important than having all the right doctrines?

SEARCHING FOR THE TRUTH IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION!

Let's think back to how we ourselves initially came into God's Church. For most of us it was probably a matter of coming face-to-face with certain teachings. Our eyes were opened to the truth of these teachings and we were forced to make some decisions. What those specific teachings happened to be in our specific circumstances was really secondary to the question of whether or not we would admit to ourselves that they were correct. Once we had made the right decision, it opened the way for us to come into God's Church.

We left the Worldwide Church of God exactly the same way!

When the teachings were changed, we had to make some decisions. And once we acknowledged that the doctrinal changes were in error, then that opened the way for us to leave WCG. Oh yes, it took longer for some of us to leave WCG than it took others to leave. But the process was basically the same ... the heretical teachings became so unbearable for us personally that leaving WCG became the only viable option.

Leaving WCG was the only way we saw for doing what Revelation 3:11 admonishes us to do.

Behold, I come quickly: HOLD THAT FAST WHICH THOU HAST, that no man take thy crown.
(Revelation 3:11)

And Revelation 2:25 reads:

But THAT WHICH YE HAVE [ALREADY] HOLD FAST TILL I COME. (Revelation 2:25)

Staying in WCG would have implied "letting go" of the truth which we had proved to ourselves. Some of those who have thus far still stayed in WCG try to secretly "hold fast". They cannot openly and boldly and publicly refute all the heretical teachings that are being taught by their ministers, because that would result in being put out of WCG; so therefore they just "ENDURE" listening to these false teachings, but they tell themselves that they are not really accepting them into their minds.

But the true teachings of the Bible have been rejected by WCG!

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS

To get back to the matter of the importance of true teachings, consider the following situations:

CASE #1:

The Seventh Day Adventists have the Sabbath Day, right? So they have some of the true teachings. And let's say they accept tithing and the teaching about clean meats. Now let's go one step further. Suppose such an Adventist also accepts the annual Holy Days? Where does that put such an Adventist ... one who in addition to the Sabbath also accepts the Holy Days, tithing and clean meats? Does THAT make him a true Christian?

CASE #2:

Let's take a religious Jew, one who observes the Sabbath, the Holy Days, and the laws of tithing and clean meats. What if such a Jew "accepts Christ"? Does THAT make him a true Christian?

CASE #3:

Let's take a converted Christian in the Church of God back in 1978. He is converted and has God's Spirit. But ten years earlier he was already in the Church ... and back in '68 he was keeping Pentecost on a Monday, which is an erroneous teaching. Back in '68 he also had many other wrong doctrinal ideas ... he didn't understand how God's will should be applied in situations involving divorce and remarriage, he thought Mr. Armstrong was Elijah, he thought Mr. Armstrong was the leader of the two witnesses, etc.. So was he REALLY a true Christian, in spite of all his wrong doctrinal ideas? Was there really a difference between this man, keeping Pentecost on the wrong day, and the Adventist who hadn't yet accepted the Holy Days or the Jew who had not yet accepted Christ?

WHAT IS IT THAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT TO GOD? A SET OF ALL THE CORRECT TEACHINGS?

You know Isaiah 66:2 very well, right?

For all those [things] hath mine hand made, and all those [things] have been, saith the LORD: but TO THIS [MAN] WILL I LOOK, [EVEN] TO [HIM THAT IS] POOR AND OF A CONTRITE SPIRIT, AND TREMBLETH AT MY WORD. (Isaiah 66:2)

Exactly what is it that this man has got, that causes God to look at him? And what about King David?

And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I HAVE FOUND DAVID the [son] of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MINE OWN HEART, which shall fulfil all my will. (Acts 13:22)

WHY was David a man after God's own heart? What did David have that King Saul did not have? Exactly how did "the correct doctrines" tie in with David and Saul? Did they feature at all?

HERE IS WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO GOD

Let's try to understand this by looking at a contrast. Let's try to contrast man's view with God's view. Consider the following statements.

MAN SAYS:

"I have all the correct doctrines of the Bible."

GOD REPLIES:

"That's very good. But what I REALLY want to know about you is: CAN YOU REALLY BE TRUSTED?"

MAN SAYS:

"I am obeying all of God's laws."

GOD REPLIES:

"That's also very good. But I want to know: ARE YOU REALLY ALWAYS TOTALLY HONEST?"

MAN SAYS:

"I am willing to make sacrifices for God. I will give up my job, rather than work on the Sabbath."

GOD REPLIES:

"That's great. But I want to know: Are you doing this FOR THE RIGHT REASONS?"

MAN SAYS:

"I support all of the Church's true teachings."

GOD REPLIES:

"That's fine. But I want to know: do you obey Me because you HAVE TO DO SO ... OR is it because you want TO PLEASE ME?"

MAN SAYS:

"I tithe faithfully, and have already done so for 20 years."

GOD REPLIES:

"Don't tell Me about your obedience. TELL ME ABOUT THE INTEGRITY OF YOUR CHARACTER!"

Are you beginning to see the point?

The absolutely most important thing which God wants to know about you and me and every other human being is NOT our record of obedience to a set of doctrines, but our INTEGRITY OF CHARACTER, OUR TRUSTWORTHINESS AND OUR RELIABILITY!

That is the outstanding characteristic of the man of Isaiah 66:2, his integrity of character! Integrity comes way ahead of doctrinal correctness.

David asked the question: who will be in God's Family, dwelling with God on His holy hill.

LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? (Psalm 15:1)

Then David listed several important attributes of those who will be with God. Notice verse 4:

In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. [HE THAT] SWEARETH TO [HIS OWN] HURT, AND CHANGETH NOT. (Psalm 15:4)

Is that statement true for you and for me? Does this reflect our integrity ... that we will keep our word even at our own expense? The man of Psalm 15:4 is someone who can REALLY be trusted! Are we like that? Or do we just have the right teachings?

Remember the account of Abimelech, the king of Gerar, taking Sarah as his wife because Abraham had said that Sarah was only his sister? And how God appeared to Abimelech in a dream and told him: you are as good as dead because you have taken another man's wife? What did Abimelech say to God?

Said he not unto me, She [is] my sister? and she, even she herself said, He [is] my brother: IN THE INTEGRITY OF MY HEART AND INNOCENCY OF MY HANDS HAVE I DONE THIS. (Genesis 20:5)

Would we talk to God this way ... appealing to the integrity of our heart? In the next verse God acknowledged Abimelech's integrity. Integrity is very important to God, much more important than doctrinal precision and accuracy.

After King Solomon had reigned for 20 years, God appeared to Solomon a second time (1 Kings 9:2). Notice what God told Solomon about his father David.

And if thou wilt walk before me, AS DAVID THY FATHER WALKED, IN INTEGRITY OF HEART, AND IN UPRIGHTNESS, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, [and] wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: (1 Kings 9:4)

It was because of his integrity of heart that David was a man after God's own heart. His integrity was David's most outstanding characteristic! As God said to Solomon, David had obeyed God in the integrity of his heart.

Remember the man Job. Recall what God Himself said to Satan about Job.

And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that [there is] none like him in the earth, A PERFECT AND AN UPRIGHT MAN, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and STILL HE HOLDETH FAST HIS INTEGRITY, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. (Job 2:3)

Yes, Job did have a problem with self-righteousness. But nevertheless GOD called Job "an upright man", one to whom the integrity of his character was very important. And Job really HAD been very careful about the things he had actually "DONE" in his life. There was nothing wrong with his past actions ... it was his THINKING that needed to change, and change it did in due time.

Think about this example of Job. Later I want to come back to it. There is a lesson we can learn from the story of Job.

A VITAL KEY

Here is something we need to understand very clearly.

We all sin; we all fall short; we all make wrong decisions at times; we all need God's mercy and forgiveness. There is no perfect man or woman on Earth. Even God's greatest servants in the Old Testament made mistakes, in some cases rather serious mistakes.

So here is the point:

AS LONG AS A PERSON IS ACTING IN INTEGRITY OF HEART, AND WHEN CONFRONTED WITH HIS OWN SINS RESPONDS HONESTLY, THEN GOD CAN WORK WITH THAT PERSON!

It is easy to be honest when we are innocent, and when we are in the right, and when we have absolutely nothing to lose by being honest. When we are innocent, then our honesty is not really being tested. It is only when we are guilty and when we are the ones who are wrong, that our honesty and our integrity is REALLY BEING TESTED! That's when our integrity is on the line.

A man of integrity is not someone who has never sinned. There is no such person among us! Romans 3:10-18 is very clear. Paul further explained the struggle with temptations in chapter 7, for example verse 19.

For the good that I would I do not: BUT THE EVIL WHICH I WOULD NOT, THAT I DO. (Romans 7:19)

So it is not a matter of never having sinned, though it should certainly be our goal and our desire to never sin. But integrity is tested and revealed when God forces us to face our sins and our failings. How do we respond? Our response reveals our integrity, or lack of integrity.

That was the difference between King Saul and King David. Saul's main problem was a lack of integrity ... the man simply could not be trusted to always be honest once his sins were pointed out to him. Saul's spontaneous response, when confronted with his sins, was to make excuses and to justify himself. He absolutely had to be backed into a corner before he would reluctantly admit some measure of guilt. David was totally different in this regard. When David was confronted with his sins, he did NOT justify himself; he freely admitted his guilt. DAVID WAS HONEST! And therefore God could work with David, but God could not work with Saul.

SOME BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

Let's consider a few Scriptures that speak about integrity and honesty. For example:

Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee. (Psalm 25:21)

Integrity is important to God. When we have integrity, that will preserve us, even as a lack of integrity leads to destruction.

Judge me, O LORD; for I HAVE WALKED IN MINE INTEGRITY: I have trusted also in the LORD; [therefore] I shall not slide. (Psalm 26:1)

It is not only important to do what is right, but to do the right things for the right reasons and with pure motives. And so the next verse says ...

EXAMINE ME, O LORD, AND PROVE ME; TRY MY REINS AND MY HEART. (Psalm 26:2)

Would we approach God this way ... BOLDLY asking Him to examine our inner motivations, and not just our outward actions? When we know that we are acting in total integrity of heart, this gives us a boldness, even as is evident in this verse. David, in writing this Psalm, was not in any way trying to imply that he was perfect and without sins; he was not denying his weaknesses. But he knew he was being totally honest with God and acting in integrity. And as Solomon wrote in Proverbs 11:3:

THE INTEGRITY OF THE UPRIGHT SHALL GUIDE THEM: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them. (Proverbs 11:3)

Notice that proverb!

That is precisely what God is looking for in each one of us. Are all of our actions being guided by our integrity? Or are there areas where we are willing to compromise our integrity?

Notice that having the correct set of doctrines doesn't really feature directly anywhere. FIRST is the matter of character.

Better [is] the poor that walketh in his integrity, than [he that is] perverse in his lips, and is a fool. (Proverbs 19:1)

The just [man] walketh in his integrity: his children [are] blessed after him. (Proverbs 20:7)

So here is the point:

THE FOUNDATION FOR OUR OBEDIENCE TO GOD MUST BE OUR INTEGRITY, RATHER THAN A SET OF RIGHT TEACHINGS!

It is the motivation of the heart which is far more important than the doctrines we accept. Is the motivation pure or is there some "guile" ... a hidden agenda or ulterior motives?

Blessed [is] the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and IN WHOSE SPIRIT [THERE IS] NO GUILE. (Psalm 32:2)

That is one of the greatest possible praises we could ever receive from God, that there is no guile in us.

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, BEHOLD AN ISRAELITE INDEED, IN

WHOM IS NO GUILT! (John 1:47)

Can God say this about you and me? If He CAN, then whether we have all the correct doctrines or not is only secondary. Everyone in the first resurrection must be "without guile". That is one of the things which is specifically mentioned about the 144,000 who will be on Mount Zion with Jesus Christ.

AND IN THEIR MOUTH WAS FOUND NO GUILT: for they are without fault before the throne of God. (Revelation 14:5)

That is the way Jesus Christ is, and the way He was during His ministry.

Who did no sin, NEITHER WAS GUILT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH: (1 Peter 2:22)

"LET'S GIVE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE"

We have all heard this saying. Perhaps we have used it ourselves at times. Perhaps we are the ones who have CLAIMED credit for things where we felt it was due to us?

So what about it?

Is there any credit due when someone:

- keeps the Sabbath?
- keeps the Holy Days?
- is faithfully tithing?
- does not eat unclean meats?
- does not believe in the trinity?
- does not believe in going to heaven or hell?
- does not keep Christmas or Easter? etc.

Is there really any credit due from God in any of these cases?

QUESTION: Exactly WHEN is credit due to someone?

ANSWER: Credit is NEVER due based on the right actions alone! Credit is only due when the right actions are done from a right motivation! Specifically, IF the right actions are done with a wrong motivation, then there is assuredly NO CREDIT with God!

As Jesus Christ explained in Matthew chapter 6, when we fast or pray or give offerings with a wrong motivation (in this case, to impress other people with our goodness), then there is no credit with God. As Christ said for these cases: "verily, they have their reward" (Matthew 6:2, 5, 16).

So let's move on to something else Jesus Christ explained.

THE CUP ... THE INSIDE AND THE OUTSIDE!

In Matthew chapter 23 Jesus Christ was addressing the Pharisees. The focus of the Pharisees was very much on "doctrinal correctness". They prided themselves in being correct. So notice one particular point Jesus Christ made about the Pharisees.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! FOR YE MAKE CLEAN THE OUTSIDE OF THE CUP AND OF THE PLATTER, BUT WITHIN THEY ARE FULL OF EXTORTION AND EXCESS. [Thou] blind Pharisee, CLEANSE FIRST THAT [WHICH IS] WITHIN THE CUP AND PLATTER, THAT THE OUTSIDE OF THEM MAY BE CLEAN ALSO. (Matthew 23:25-26)

There are several important things we should notice about these statements.

- 1) The Pharisees focused on the outside and not on the inside.
- 2) In fact, they totally ignored the inside.
- 3) GOD wants us to FIRST clean the inside and not to worry about the outside.
- 4) THE WAY to clean the outside is to focus on cleaning the inside!
- 5) When the inside is really cleaned up, then the outside does not present a problem and it is also very readily cleaned up.

How does this apply to what we are discussing? Exactly what is on the outside and what is on the inside?

Specifically: WHAT ABOUT THE LAWS OF GOD ... are they on the outside of the cup or are they on the inside of the cup?

In discussing the laws of God, notice what the Apostle Paul explained in the Book of Romans.

For when THE GENTILES, which have not the law, DO BY NATURE THE THINGS CONTAINED IN THE LAW, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, THEIR CONSCIENCE ALSO BEARING WITNESS, and [their] thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) (Romans 2:14-15)

Paul was pointing out here that MANY OF THE THINGS God's laws instruct us to do are self-evident even to those nations which have never had God's laws available to them. Their consciences tell them to do these things contained in God's laws. For example, all people should KNOW that it is wrong to murder someone, to steal, to lie, to commit adultery with another man's wife, to use God's name in cursing and blaspheming, etc..

The laws of God fall into two broad categories. There are those laws that regulate our conduct as it affects other people (i.e. don't kill them, steal from them, lie to them, etc.). And then there are those laws that involve special specific instructions (or state specific principles) God gives us (i.e. keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days, tithe, don't eat unclean meats, don't smoke or get drunk, etc.).

Now THE INSIDE of the cup is the way we think; THE OUTSIDE of the cup is what we do. To get back to Christ's statements:

IF WE DO NOT CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK, then the outward actions, whatever they may be, will be a waste of time as far as righteousness in the sight of God is concerned! It is a waste of time to polish the outside of the cup.

BUT IF WE FIRST CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK, then this changed way of thinking will CAUSE us to change the things we do. Therefore this changed way of thinking will AUTOMATICALLY initiate the process of changing our outward actions. The changed way of thinking will produce the cleaning up of the outside of the cup. It is a spontaneous consequence of changing the way we think.

THE INSIDE OF THE CUP REVIEWED

To get back to the laws of God: those laws that regulate our conduct towards other people and which we can figure out with the help of our own consciences (don't kill or steal, etc.) are on THE INSIDE of the cup. All those laws which, according to Paul, the nations could figure out on their own are a part of the inside of the cup. To transgress those laws involves defiling our consciences, even if we have no knowledge of all the specific laws of God. To break these laws has an automatic negative effect on our character and on our integrity.

ALL OF THE REST OF GOD'S LAWS AND THE APPLICATION OF THOSE LAWS ARE INITIALLY ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE CUP!

Specifically:

- Sabbath-keeping is on the outside of the cup;
- Holy Day observance is on the outside;
- Pentecost on a Monday or a Sunday is on the outside;
- Tithing is on the outside;
- Clean and unclean meats are on the outside;
- Smoking is on the outside;
- The use of facial make-up is on the outside; etc..

To put it another way: all of those things that require KNOWLEDGE are on the outside of the cup. If we lack the required knowledge, then transgressing in those things has nothing to do with THE INSIDE, THE WAY WE THINK!

But it doesn't stop there!

Once we receive KNOWLEDGE, then we become accountable for that knowledge. And once we are convicted in our hearts that this knowledge is true and is correct, that we simply cannot prove it wrong (as Mr. Armstrong initially tried to do with the Sabbath!) ... THEN IT BECOMES A PART OF THE INSIDE OF THE CUP!

Do you understand this?

As long as we don't know about the Sabbath, not keeping it does not affect our character or our integrity.

As long as we don't know Pentecost is always on a Sunday, it also does not affect our integrity if you keep it on a Monday. As long as we don't know God does not want us to smoke or to eat unclean meats or to wear make-up, those things are nothing more than the outside of the cup and they do NOT affect our character. As long as the caretaker of the Billy Sunday Tabernacle in the late 1920's did not know that the Good Friday-Easter Sunday teaching is false, it did not affect his integrity.

BUT ONCE WE HAVE KNOWLEDGE IT BECOMES A TOTALLY DIFFERENT BALL GAME!

Once we have knowledge of the truth in these matters, knowledge we cannot refute, even if we don't like it (like Mr. Armstrong not really wanting to prove the Sabbath to be true), THEN not doing what is right, or not believing what is true, becomes a matter of INTEGRITY!

Once a person knows he should keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days, that he should tithe and not eat unclean meats, THEN knowingly transgressing or compromising in these things becomes a matter of integrity.

As James wrote:

Therefore TO HIM THAT KNOWETH to do good, and doeth [it] not, TO HIM IT IS SIN. (James 4:17)

Not doing the things we KNOW we should do becomes sin because our knowledge of these things transferred them from the outside to the inside of the cup! In effect, when we refuse to act on the knowledge we have gained, we are not letting our integrity guide us.

IT IS "THE SMALL THINGS" WHICH TEST OUR INTEGRITY

Don't be fooled by people who want to divide obedience to God and His ways into big things and small things, things that are major and those that are minor. The Catholic Church already did that many centuries ago, when they divided sins into different categories ... supposedly some are "MORTAL sins", while others are only "VENIAL sins".

That's not the way God views sins!

Sinning involves compromising our integrity before God. And compromising in "minor" things reveals our character to God just as much as if we had compromised in something "major".

Jesus Christ said very clearly and unequivocally:

He that is FAITHFUL IN THAT WHICH IS LEAST is FAITHFUL ALSO IN MUCH: and he that is UNJUST IN THE LEAST is UNJUST ALSO IN MUCH. (Luke 16:10)

And James explained ...

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and YET OFFEND IN ONE [POINT], HE IS GUILTY OF ALL. (James 2:10)

It becomes a matter of integrity. Knowingly rejecting one point (whatever that one point may be) tells

God that we cannot really be trusted to be unconditionally faithful IN EVERYTHING that God may want from us.

Let's face it: most of us are not going to be tested on the really "BIG" things, like whether or not we'll become mass-murderers or bank robbers or whether we will willingly dabble in demonism or whether we will openly live in an adulterous relationship, etc..

How many pieces of fruit have you eaten in your life? Many hundreds? How much significance did you attach to eating any one of those pieces of fruit? Probably very little. Yet one of the greatest tests ever faced by any two human beings involved eating or not eating a certain piece of fruit (i.e. Adam and Eve in the Garden). God tested them as to whether they would be faithful "in that which is least" ... it was just a piece of fruit.

King Saul went out with his army and killed several hundred thousand Amalekites ... men, women, children and nursing infants. They also slaughtered tens of thousands of domestic animals. It would have been a gory sight and in today's terms the news media would have accused Saul of committing genocide ... massacring an entire nation. Every man in Saul's army would have plunged his spear and his sword into many a timid body. What was so terribly wrong about keeping ONE SINGLE PERSON, out of several hundred thousand, alive, in addition to some of the better breeding animals? Saul had more than 99,999% carried out God's instructions. It was A LITTLE THING to have killed one more person and one more herd of animals. But in this case God made clear that 99,999% obedience amounted to FAILURE! This was Saul's "BIG" test ... and he failed because of "the little thing" of not having killed just one more person! The problem was that his integrity was not right!

When the Billy Sunday Tabernacle caretaker in the 1920's rejected the truth about the "three days and three nights", that was just some head-knowledge. It didn't affect the way he treated other people ... yet God immediately stopped answering his prayers for the healing of the sick. The rejection of truth he could not refute affected the man's integrity ... he was not honest with the truth.

WE TOO WILL BE TESTED, AND ALREADY HAVE BEEN TESTED, BY MANY "SMALL" THINGS!

How we respond to every test that comes our way, be it big or be it small, tells God something about our integrity. In many cases it is not the "life-and-death" issues that become our biggest tests; it is the temptation to compromise in matters that don't seem to be very important at all. It is only in retrospect that the real significance of those events will become clear to us.

It is always a matter of character and integrity. Integrity doesn't differentiate between "big" issues and "little" issues. Whether something is right or wrong has nothing to do with whether it is "a major point" or only "a minor point". It is a matter of principle. When we face major issues in our lives, we are often quite aware of the fact that we are going through a test. But when we are faced with minor, seemingly unimportant issues we can easily be caught off guard. God is not just interested in our integrity when we are "on our best behaviour" and fully aware of going through a test; God wants to know what we are like 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Never underestimate the consequences of careless decisions in what seem to us to be only minor questions. It was Jesus Christ who said:

He that is FAITHFUL IN THAT WHICH IS LEAST ... he that is UNJUST IN THE LEAST ... (Luke 16:10)

WE SHOULD NEVER RISK OUR INTEGRITY BEFORE GOD BY CARELESSLY RELEGATING SOME QUESTION TO THE STATUS OF BEING "LEAST" IMPORTANT!

UNDERSTANDING REAL REPENTANCE

In the New Testament the Greek word for "repentance" is "metanoia", and the Greek verb for "repent" is "metanoeo". This Greek verb is formed from the two words "meta" (meaning: with, afterwards, etc.) and "noeo" (meaning: to perceive with the mind, to understand). It comes from the Greek word for "MIND" (i.e. "nous").

Thus in the New Testament the word "repent" means:

- 1) TO PERCEIVE AFTERWARDS;
- 2) TO CHANGE THE MIND AFTERWARDS;
- 3) TO THINK DIFFERENTLY.

So what does "to repent" mean in practical terms?

Repentance has to do with the way we think. "To repent" means that we CHANGE that way of thinking. In other words, when we repent we are cleaning the inside of the cup.

The problem that arises is that most people, when they think of repentance, may "SPEAK" about the inside, but their actual "FOCUS" is on THE OUTSIDE of the cup ... they look for Sabbath-keeping and tithing and Holy Day observance and abstaining from unclean meats. And in the process many people actually totally ignore the inside of the cup!

Yes, these things (Sabbath-keeping, etc.) can indeed be evidence of the fact that the inside of the cup has been cleaned. After all, I mentioned earlier that as we gain knowledge of these things, so they are transferred FOR US PERSONALLY from the outside to the inside of the cup.

But we should also never forget that, for people who have never changed the way they think, who have never come to perceive that their former way of thinking about themselves was wrong, these things are still only nothing more than the outside of the cup! Thus they are not necessarily any evidence of the inside of the cup at all, though they certainly could be.

So what is the real key to this question?

THE KEY LIES IN EXAMINING WHAT COMES "FIRST"! THAT'S WHAT JESUS CHRIST SAID!

In plain terms:

We can never clean the inside just by polishing the outside! And if we start out with the outside of the cup already being halfway cleaned, then just continuing to clean the outside of the cup doesn't really achieve anything.

There are TWO possible ways to clean the outside of the cup, but there is ONLY ONE way to clean the inside of the cup!

To clean the outside of the cup, we can either:

A) polish the outside of the cup itself; or

B) simply clean the inside of the cup, and the outside will automatically become clean.

But we can only clean the inside of the cup BY SPECIFICALLY FOCUSING ON THE INSIDE! There is no other way! To focus on the outside alone will NEVER affect a change on the inside of the cup. Changing the inside of the cup will automatically affect a change on the outside. But the reciprocal statement is not true ... changing the outside of the cup will NOT automatically produce a change on the inside.

In real godly repentance we have to come to think differently about ourselves from the way we thought before repentance. We have to acknowledge that Jeremiah 17:9 also applies to us ourselves:

THE HEART [IS] DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL [THINGS], AND DESPERATELY WICKED: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

This is not a description of some other person's heart (i.e. mind); it describes the way WE spontaneously tend to be.

In real repentance we have to admit that OUR OWN natural mind is spontaneously hostile to God, as Paul explained.

Because THE CARNAL MIND [IS] ENMITY AGAINST GOD: FOR IT IS NOT SUBJECT TO THE LAW OF GOD, NEITHER INDEED CAN BE. (Romans 8:7)

We have to acknowledge that Paul's description of his own mind in the previous chapter (Romans 7) is a description of OUR OWN mind.

Like Job, whom God Himself described as "a perfect and an upright man", we have to come to understand that the way our minds work is "vile" before God:

BEHOLD, I AM VILE; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. (Job 40:4)

We have to come to see that what David said about people in general also applies to us:

Behold, thou hast made my days [as] an handbreadth; and mine age [is] as nothing before thee: verily EVERY MAN AT HIS BEST STATE [IS] ALTOGETHER VANITY. Selah. (Psalm 39:5)

We have to come to see that without a prior change of the inside of the cup, without first changing the way we think about self, all our accepting of the right doctrines is meaningless:

But we are all as an unclean [thing], AND ALL OUR RIGHTEOUSNESSES [ARE] AS FILTHY RAGS; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. (Isaiah 64:6)

If we have not first changed the way we think, then there is nothing impressive at all about our keeping of all the right doctrines. "Filthy rags" are not anything that we would voluntarily want to be associated with,

right? But in this verse "filthy rags" refers to commandment-keeping WITHOUT having changed the way we think, without first cleaning up the inside of the cup.

Can we understand why Jesus Christ condemned the Pharisees and their version of "commandment-keeping"? Even though they (in many cases) did the right things, God still could not really trust them, because they had never faced the uncleanness, the extortion and the excess that was on the inside (see Matthew 23:25-27).

THOSE IN OTHER CHURCHES WHO ACCEPT TRUE TEACHINGS

So what about the people in other churches who come to understand additional true doctrines? What about the Adventist who accepts the Holy Days? What about the religious Jew who accepts Christ? Where do people like this fit in?

To understand their specific situation we have to backtrack a bit and ask some additional questions. Let's take the case of an Adventist first.

When people join the Seventh Day Adventist Church, have they become true Christians? One of their major traits is that they have accepted the Sabbath. Were they true Christians BEFORE they accepted the Sabbath? At what point in time did they become true Christians?

Understand that Sabbath-keeping of itself is nothing more than the outside of the cup. Accepting the Sabbath does NOT of itself cause any changes on the inside of the cup. Similarly, accepting tithing and the teaching about clean meats also does not cause any changes on the inside of the cup.

Most people who become Adventists belonged to some other Church before that. So were they true Christians in their former Churches? Or did they become true Christians when they joined the Adventist Church? Or did they become true Christians when they also accepted the Holy Days?

IF THEY HAVE EVER DONE SO, AT EXACTLY WHICH STAGE OF THEIR RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT DID THEY EVER CLEAN THE INSIDE OF THE CUP?

That is the real question!

Don't mistake Sabbath-keeping or Holy Day observance with cleaning the inside of the cup! It is IMPOSSIBLE to achieve a clean-up of the inside of the cup simply by additional polishing of the outside.

Please don't misunderstand me. I am not trying to point a finger. I am trying to help you understand THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A TRUE CHRISTIAN! I hope you can see that there is a lot more to being a real Christian than just having the right set of doctrines.

Take the case of the religious Jew.

He started out already having the Sabbath Day, the Holy Days (well, almost), tithing and the knowledge of clean and unclean meats. Was he therefore already a true Christian? Well, no, because he had not yet accepted that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and is his personal Saviour.

Since he was NOT yet a true Christian prior to accepting Christ as his Saviour, therefore it must mean that at that stage he had also NOT YET cleaned up the inside of the cup, even though he already had the Sabbath, etc..

So when he then accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, exactly what happened? Did he just add one more correct biblical teaching to the set of true doctrines he already had ... or did he actually clean up the inside of the cup? Frankly, either of these two possibilities could be true. In some cases it is just a matter of accepting one more true doctrine ... and the outside of the cup is just polished a little bit more, but the inside is unaffected. In other cases the focus is totally on cleaning the inside of the cup ... and as a result of this change on the inside, the outside takes on a totally different "shine".

A POTENTIAL PROBLEM FOR RELIGIOUS PEOPLE

We need to understand that the process of becoming a true Christian is initiated by God the Father Himself. As Jesus Christ said:

NO MAN CAN COME TO ME, EXCEPT THE FATHER which hath sent me DRAW HIM: and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:44)

God "draws" people by means of "calling" people. But for many people it never goes beyond that stage, because THEY DON'T DO THEIR PART! They don't respond correctly to God! As Jesus Christ explained:

FOR MANY ARE CALLED, BUT FEW [ARE] CHOSEN. (Matthew 22:14)

It is not enough to just be "called" by God. We must after that initial calling also be "chosen". And "being chosen" by God is conditional on us RESPONDING CORRECTLY TO GOD'S CALL!

The way God frequently "calls" people is by opening our eyes to the truth about some particular doctrine. What that particular doctrine happens to be is not the main issue; what is really important is how we respond to that opening of our eyes. Do we respond with honesty and with integrity? Or do we deny the truth we are coming to see?

The process of us becoming true Christians is started when we respond honestly to this opportunity God is extending to us. Whatever doctrine God may have shown us is not important of and by itself; it is simply the means towards a specific end. That specific end is to help us to focus on the inside of the cup!

Now in many cases people may accept the true doctrine which was shown to them ... but that is as far as it goes. The inside of the cup is unaffected by this new knowledge. But they are sincere, and so God shows them another true doctrine ... again with the goal that this should help them to focus on the inside of the cup. Of those who also accept this true doctrine, some may "get it" and now see the inside of the cup, while others still don't see the inside. And so God shows them a third truth ... and a fourth and a fifth and a sixth truth ... until they finally come to see the inside of the cup ... and REALLY change the way they think!

However, there are many people who are not called by God who also read the Bible, and who can figure out quite a number of correct doctrines (at least more or less correctly). The Pharisees would be a case in point: they were not really called by God and yet they had many biblical teachings correct. The same is true for many of the churches which call themselves "Christian", but make no attempt to obey God in any way. Such churches may actually have a varying number of "correct" teachings.

What have such churches got? Well, they've got the outside of the cup. And they may be correct in a few of their teachings.

Sometimes there are people in churches like this who are "searching". They study and then find that some of the teachings of their church are wrong. So they search and then find another church which has the particular teaching they are concerned about correct. After a while they may find that something else is still missing and so they search some more ... and find a church which has still more correct doctrines. If the Sabbath is one of their concerns, they may end up in the Seventh Day Adventist Church. If some other doctrine is their major concern, they may join the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Mormons or some other group.

Eventually they may even end up in the Church of God.

But exactly where along the line did they clean up the inside of the cup? It seems that they simply accepted one more true doctrine at a time in their journey towards the Church of God. Were they really doing anything more than just cleaning the outside of the cup?

Here is the danger for such people!

Because they may have searched for a long time, it is easy for them to mistake their process of searching for the truth as being equal to "examining the inside of the cup"!

BUT THAT IS NOT NECESSARILY SO!

They may feel that they "repented" (examined the inside of the cup, changed the way they think) WAY BACK when they embarked on their search for doctrinal purity. They may be convinced that GOD is the One who "led them" from one church to another until they finally ended up in God's Church with all the right teachings ... or are they really "all the right teachings"? And yes, their thinking may even have "changed" somewhat over the years. But whether they actually examined the inside of the cup "way back" is really another question.

Yes, in some cases such people may indeed have examined the inside of the cup way back then. But in other cases it is also quite clear that people have done nothing more than polish the outside of the cup for a decade or two ... they have simply accepted one true teaching after another ... but the inside of the cup was never looked at! It was never "made clean".

And the danger is that "having already had so many of the right doctrines" can make people short-sighted. They can't see as far as the inside of the cup ... they can only see the outside and they assume that this MUST somehow be the inside. This is especially difficult for them because for other people those same doctrines have in fact BECOME a part of the inside. This can be confusing. For example, at the same time as the Sabbath has become a part of the inside of the cup for a repentant Christian, the same Sabbath is still only a part of the outside of the cup for someone (like Job in the early chapters of that book) who has never yet faced the inside of the cup. Instead of facing the inside of the cup, this person faces the Sabbath and tells himself that THIS must be the inside of the cup.

Can you follow?

For example, the Pharisees could only see the outside of the cup, yet they were convinced that they were looking at the inside. Notice what Jesus Christ explained:

And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, THAT THEY WHICH SEE NOT MIGHT SEE; AND THAT THEY WHICH SEE MIGHT BE MADE BLIND. (John 9:39)

Christ came to help us see the inside of the cup, to help us see why and how we need to change the

way we think. The second part of this verse does not mean that Christ actually "blinded" people. What Christ was saying here is: He came so that those people WHO THINK AND WHO CLAIM that they can see the inside of the cup would have to come to recognize that all along they had been blind to the real inside of the cup. This is illustrated in the next two verses.

And [some] of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, ARE WE BLIND ALSO? (John 9:40)

Obviously, the Pharisees didn't THINK that they were blind. They felt they could see everything. And so Christ replied:

Jesus said unto them, IF YE WERE BLIND, ye should have no sin: BUT NOW YE SAY, WE SEE; THEREFORE YOUR SIN REMAINETH. (John 9:41)

Their sins were not yet forgiven because they were not really repentant. This means that they did not really see the inside of the cup ... they didn't see where they themselves were wrong. After all, they basically had all (well, let's say "most") of the right doctrines; they could see all of the outside of the cup quite clearly. But that is as far as it went. They never made the connection between the outside and the inside and so they also never made the transition from looking at the outside to looking at the inside. But THEIR CLAIM of being able to see made them accountable.

Many religious people today can quite easily be in exactly the same position ... they have all (or most) of the right doctrines but they still cannot see the inside of the cup. And, as Mr. Armstrong used to say, what they don't know, they just don't know that they don't know. They CLAIM to see the inside ... and therefore their sins remain with them.

CONSIDER A PARABLE

In Matthew 21 Jesus told a short parable.

But what think ye? A [certain] man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I [go], sir: and went not. (Matthew 21:28-30)

Do we understand the difference between these two sons? The first son knew very well that he had been rebellious. He had refused to obey. When he saw his own rebellion, he was looking at the inside of the cup. So he changed and then obeyed. In effect he cleaned up the inside of the cup.

The second son deceived himself into thinking that he was obedient. He SAID the right words ... but he was really only polishing the outside of his cup! He didn't see that he was actually just as rebellious as the other son. And on top of that he was also dishonest and deceitful; he could not be trusted. Unlike the first son he didn't have any pangs of conscience ... he was totally oblivious to the inside of his cup. Thus the filth and dirt there never came to his attention.

Notice how Christ explained this parable.

Whether of them twain did the will of [his] father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That THE PUBLICANS AND THE HARLOTS GO INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD BEFORE YOU. (Matthew 21:31)

The publicans were like the first son, who could see his own rebellion. But the Pharisees were like the second son, who couldn't see beyond the shine of the outside of the cup. As Christ continued to say:

For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and YE BELIEVED HIM NOT: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and YE, when ye had seen [it], REPENTED NOT AFTERWARDS that ye might believe him. (Matthew 21:32)

The point is that the Pharisees didn't even get it "afterwards". The inside of the cup remained hidden from them. They didn't really want to face the inside.

ANOTHER LOOK AT JOB

Earlier we briefly looked at the man Job. We noted that God Himself had referred to Job as "a perfect and an upright man" (see Job 1:8; 2:3).

Now here is the apparent conflict:

On the one hand Job is presented by God as a perfect and an upright man; on the other hand there is still clearly something wrong with Job ... to bring that out into the open is the whole point of the book.

So what are we to learn from this?

Clearly Job was living by all of the doctrines and true teachings of God that he was aware of. How many teachings he understood correctly is immaterial ... his integrity was fine. As God told Satan: in spite of severe trials Job still "holds fast his integrity" (Job 2:3). It wasn't that Job was dishonest, two-faced, a crook or a cheat. He lived in integrity. And God acknowledged this.

The problem with Job was that with him his righteousness had never gone further than the outside of the cup.

He had EVERY true doctrine he possibly could have had! Doctrines that affect the inside of the cup (how to treat other people) and doctrines that only affect the outside ... he had them.

But Job's FOCUS was on the outward actions. His outward ACTIONS, based on all these doctrines, were the right ones. He was comfortable with that focus. He had chosen to not focus on the real inside of the cup. He focused on outward actions, not on the underlying inward thinking.

The lesson?

YOU CAN HAVE ALL THE RIGHT TEACHINGS AND THAT STILL DOES NOT GUARANTEE THAT YOU WILL SEE THE INSIDE OF THE CUP!

Another lesson?

FIRST TOTALLY CLEANING THE OUTSIDE OF THE CUP BEFORE EVER COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE INSIDE IS PROBABLY THE MOST DIFFICULT ROUTE OF ALL!

The shinier the outside of the cup is, the more likely it is to blind us to the dirty reality of the inside of the cup. That is why Jesus Christ said that the publicans and the harlots responded more positively to looking at the inside than the Pharisees ... it was easier for the publicans to see the dirty reality of the inside, since for them there was no polished outside to distract them.

Job's three friends couldn't really help Job because they also only focused on the outside of the cup. They implied that the outside of Job's cup was secretly flawed. In this way they totally missed the point.

God's dealings with Job were intended to help Job break through this barrier the shiny outside of the cup had created and to then openly and honestly confront the real inside of the cup. Ideally God only has to open our eyes to the truth about one or two doctrines to get us to confront the inside of the cup. Sometimes it may take several more such "doctrinal revelations" to get us to face the inside. With Job no amount of doctrinal understanding achieved such a focus on the inside of the cup ... exposing him to major trials was the only way to change his focus.

It was only when Job focused on the inside that he really repented. Once he focused on the inside, he was able to say: "Behold I AM VILE" (Job 40:4) and "wherefore I ABHOR MYSELF and repent (change the way I think)" (Job 42:6).

Job didn't have to change his outward actions; he didn't have to accept any additional correct doctrines. He had to change his THINKING. He had to change his FOCUS ... from on the outside to on the inside of the cup.

It is not a matter of questioning Job's actions or even his integrity. He did everything right that he was aware of. He didn't compromise in any area of his life. He wasn't "an evil person". He just had never established a right relationship with God because he had never focused on the inside of the cup. He was blinded to that inside. So God brought about circumstances that would help Job to see the real inside.

The same is true for many people today who may be very religious. They may have spent many years acquiring all the right doctrines, searching from one church to the next. There is nothing wrong with their integrity! They are committed and firmly loyal to the doctrines they have found. But in many cases they have never examined the real inside of the cup. They have never come to understand that their focus has all along been on the outside of the cup. They need something to temporarily shatter that outside cleanness of the cup, so that their eyes can be opened to the dirt on the inside of the cup, so that their minds can be "renewed".

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:2)

Once they have faced and dealt with the inside of the cup, THEN the clean outside can be restored (even as Job was restored), and they can live by all of the right doctrines they had already understood ... but now with a new perspective.

But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that WE SHOULD SERVE IN NEWNESS OF SPIRIT, and not [in] the oldness of the letter. (Romans 7:6)

Consider the Apostle Paul's own experiences. As a Pharisee he had polished the outside of his cup very meticulously. He had it all ... the right pedigree and the right connections and "the righteousness which is in the law" (see Philippians 3:6). But that polished outside had to be shattered, to enable Paul to focus on the inside. And once he had done that (i.e. once he had repented), then he was STILL obedient to the laws of God, and if anything more so; but he was no longer concerned about focusing on the outside of the cup. As far as the outside was concerned, Paul wrote:

Yea doubtless, and I count all things [but] loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I HAVE SUFFERED THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS, AND DO COUNT THEM [BUT] DUNG, that I may win Christ, (Philippians 3:8)

Even though he was still faithfully obedient to all of God's laws, yet the outside of the cup, his past great glory, had become totally insignificant to Paul.

So once people have faced the inside of the cup, they can then live "in newness of life" (see Romans 6:4), NOT because they have all the right doctrines, but because they now have the right FOCUS ... on the inside of their cup. Once the focus is right, then the right doctrines will follow. God will give them understanding. If they knowingly resist any true doctrine (e.g. the Billy Sunday Tabernacle keeper), then it calls their integrity into question. And God has explained how he will deal with such a situation. This is found in the Book of Ezekiel.

Again, WHEN A RIGHTEOUS [MAN] DOTHTURN FROM HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND COMMIT INIQUITY, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, HE SHALL DIE: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH HE HATH DONE SHALL NOT BE REMEMBERED; but his blood will I require at thine hand. (Ezekiel 3:20; also Ezekiel 18:24)

When I shall say to the righteous, [that] he shall surely live; IF HE TRUST TO HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND COMMIT INIQUITY, ALL HIS RIGHTEOUSNESSES SHALL NOT BE REMEMBERED; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. (Ezekiel 33:13)

So if religious people of integrity come to the point where they honestly face the inside of the cup, there is no reason to believe that they will not accept all further truth that God may reveal to them. They will have come to see that in the past they had focused on the outside of the cup, and that focus needs to change. Their test is whether they will change their focus.

THE DOCTRINAL CHANGES IN WCG

We started out by referring to the doctrinal changes that have taken place in WCG. WHY has God allowed these changes?

God has allowed them in order to test our integrity!

God wants to know about every single one of us whether we are totally trustworthy. Can He REALLY trust us to be faithful, not only in the big things, but also in those things we would think of as "the least"?

Are we really CONVINCED AND CONVICTED about the things we believe and the things we do? Or do we simply do them because that is what someone tells us to do and because that is what is expected? God wants to know just how COMMITTED we are to the truth? Will we let people push us around? Are some of our beliefs negotiable? Do we only do some things because we HAVE TO do them? How will

we respond when someone offers us licence to change some things? God wants to know whether we "are soon removed (from the true teachings) unto another gospel" (see Galatians 1:6).

To test our integrity God will often do two things:

Firstly, God will show us where we are wrong in some area. The proof will be irrefutable. Then we are tested as to whether we will acknowledge and respond to the things God has shown us.

Secondly, God will give us permission for something we want, but which is actually displeasing to God. God expects us to know better! And then, when we DO the thing we wanted permission for, then God punishes us, because we have compromised our integrity! For example, God gave Balaam the permission he wanted (to go with Balak's messengers) ... and then Balaam lost his life. He had really known better than to ask God again about going to Balak (see Numbers 22:1-22; 31:8). Likewise, God allows His people to have preachers who will tell people exactly what they want to hear:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away [their] ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

When teachers preach the things we want to hear, giving us the permission to do things we want to do, then our integrity is being tested. WE REALLY KNOW BETTER! Like Balaam, we had first been taught what is right. When we weren't happy with that teaching, THEN God allows us to "heap teachers to ourselves" who tell us what we want to hear. But God will surely punish us if we accept such licence.

The doctrinal changes that have been introduced in WCG over the past ten years have been a test of integrity for all of us. How many of us have accepted changes in explanations that were presented without so much as a shred of biblical proof? How many of us have accepted new explanations because they supposedly "don't really change anything"? How many people have responded to supposed "minor" changes in the Church's teachings with a statement like: "I CAN LIVE WITH THAT"? How many of us have allowed ourselves to be bullied and pushed around by an endless stream of new explanations about "minor" issues before we finally took a stand and said: "THAT'S ENOUGH! NO MORE!"? How many of us kept telling ourselves that some of the water coming out of Pasadena's fountain was actually "SWEET", even though most of the rest was clearly "BITTER"? (see James 3:11-12).

Oh yes, we have now taken a stand on "the big four" issues ... the Sabbath, the Holy Days, tithing and clean meats. But with how many lesser issues along the way did we compromise or allow ourselves to be tricked? One servant of God who allowed himself to be tricked into eating some food payed with his life for allowing himself to be deceived in this way (see 1 Kings 13:16-24). Being deceived by clever arguments is not really an excuse in the sight of God.

ALL OF US HAVE COMPROMISED! YES, WE HAVE!

True, some have compromised more than others. But all of us have compromised to some degree along the way. We need to admit this to ourselves and to God! Are we going to be like David, or like Saul, who always justified himself? We have been asleep. Our desire to always want to see the best in the actions of our leaders set us up for being taken advantage of. Like the prophet who was talked into eating when he should not have eaten, we were caught off guard.

And we, the ministry, bear a greater responsibility. We are heading for "the greater condemnation" (see James 3:1) unless we acknowledge our failings to God. Are we willing to uphold the truth of God, even to

our own hurt? Even when we would really like it to be something else? Can God again trust us to be faithful with His Word and in applying it to EVERY area of our lives?

Are all our actions really motivated by a desire not only to obey God, but to go one step further ... TO PLEASE GOD ABOVE AND BEYOND REQUIRED OBEDIENCE?

And whatsoever we ask, WE receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and DO THOSE THINGS THAT ARE PLEASING IN HIS SIGHT. (1 John 3:22)

Are we motivated not only by: "what do I HAVE TO do?", but even more so by: "what would God LIKE me to do"? Are we really willing to obey God in the full integrity of our hearts?

If the integrity is right, then the right doctrines will follow, if they aren't there already. The issue is not one of doctrine but one of integrity, being willing to honestly face the truth when we are confronted with it, being willing to accept and to act on true explanations.

We need to be sure we never take our eyes off the inside of the cup!

It is easy to assume that examining the inside of the cup is a one-time thing, something we only had to do originally when we first came to repentance.

NO SO!

There is an original repentance, an original looking at the inside of the cup. But thereafter God expects us to have a repentant attitude as an ongoing state of mind, being willing to repent readily and quickly when we see our sins and shortcomings. But having a repentant frame of mind is just another way of saying that we should ALWAYS focus on and be aware of the inside of the cup.

The right actions must always be based on the foundation of the right attitude, the desire to want to please God. If we ever do the right things from any motivation other than a desire to please God, THEN we will have taken our focus away from the inside of the cup, and we will be focusing on the outside. And then there will not be any credit from God for such "right actions".

TO SUMMARIZE:

- 1) The most important thing to God about any person is that person's integrity of character.
- 2) We have all sinned and there is no perfect person amongst us.
- 3) Integrity means that we are honest when confronted by God with our sins. It also means we are honest in acknowledging the truth when it is proved to us.
- 4) Honesty and integrity are far more important to God than doctrinal correctness.
- 5) Credit is only due when we do the right things for the right reason, this being a desire to please God.
- 6) Those of God's laws that should be self-evident to all people are on the inside of the cup. Or, to be more precise, people's RESPONSES to these laws are on the inside of the cup. The laws themselves stay on the outside. Compromising these laws destroys right character and integrity.

- 7) All other laws (i.e. our responses to those laws), which we would not know without being told about them, are initially on the outside of the cup. Breaking them before we have a knowledge of these laws, does not adversely affect our integrity ... we did it ignorantly.
- 8) Once we become aware of such laws, and see proof that they are correct, then these laws become a part of the inside of the cup for us personally.
- 9) Integrity is frequently tested in "small" things, when we are more tempted to be casual and more willing to compromise (e.g. "I can live with that doctrine or explanation", etc.). Jesus Christ made very clear that our faithfulness in small things reflects our attitude towards "big" things.
- 10) Real repentance involves changing the way we think, being willing to focus on the inside of the cup.
- 11) When God calls a person, He opens the person's mind to new doctrinal understanding for the purpose of enabling the person to see the inside of the cup. With most people (including me) God has to do this with several doctrines "before the penny drops", i.e. before we get the idea to focus on the inside of our own cup.
- 12) The only way to see the inside of the cup is to specifically focus on it.
- 13) As long as a person has never specifically seen the inside of the cup, all the doctrines that require divine revelation (i.e. the Sabbath, Holy Days, tithing, etc.) are only on the outside of the cup. They are important, but they are still only on the outside.
- 14) The danger many religious people face is that they can mistake doctrinal correctness for the inside of the cup. Doctrines themselves never become a part of the inside of the cup. The inside of the cup refers to our responses to God's laws, and in the process seeing our own inner motivations and attitudes, or as Paul put it, coming face-to-face with the thoughts and intents of our hearts (see Hebrews 4:12).
- 15) The more right doctrines people start out with (i.e. a clean and shiny outside) BEFORE having ever looked at the inside of the cup, the more difficult it seems to be for them to comprehend exactly what it is that constitutes the inside of the cup. Their minds have become conditioned to examining the outside ... inner motivations of the heart didn't feature in their previous assessments of what God expects.
- 16) It is never a matter of questioning the integrity or the sincerity of people in other churches. The inside of the cup is just something they have not yet seen. John 6:44 applies.
- 17) Doctrinal changes in WCG have been allowed by God to test OUR integrity. Judgment is now on us, the Church of God (see 1 Peter 4:17). It is our integrity that God wants to test.
- 18) We in God's Church HAVE all slumbered and slept; we have allowed ourselves to be deceived by "clever" arguments. We have let explanations go unchallenged that should not have gone unchallenged. And we have let down the people of God who looked to us, the ministry, for leadership throughout this heretical onslaught. Like David, we have things we need to confess to God and turn away from. Will we do this like David, or will we justify ourselves like Saul?
- 19) In any doctrinal discussion we need to be careful that the outside of the cup never becomes the main focus of attention. For every doctrinal question the inside of the cup must always be the perspective which we use.
- 20) Total honesty must always precede doctrinal correctness! And no, we very likely do NOT YET have "ALL" the correct doctrines. Even as we kept Pentecost on the wrong day before 1974, there very likely

are some other things we don't have fully correct yet. Till then those things are only on the outside of the cup. So we needn't worry about them.

As we saw earlier, Isaiah 66:2 makes clear what it is that God is looking for in us. It is the attitude of total honesty and integrity of heart, which causes us to tremble at the thought of doing the right thing for wrong, selfish motives.

For all those [things] hath mine hand made, and all those [things] have been, saith the LORD: but TO THIS [MAN] WILL I LOOK, [even] to [him that is] poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. (Isaiah 66:2)

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