



ISSUE

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Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
THE OL-
SEN PARK
CHURCH OF
CHRIST

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

9:30 AM

10:30 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Patrick Ledbetter

Brady McAlister

Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Walker McNear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Justin Smiley

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

Seeing God within Me

By Kyle Pope

In 1983, actress Shirley MacLaine authored a book entitled *Out on a Limb* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983). Five years later, on January 18 and 19 of 1987, the book was adapted to a two-part, five-hour television mini-series of the same title which was broadcast on ABC. The book and mini-series portrayed MacLaine’s personal spiritual journey to accept a mix of Eastern religious beliefs and extraterrestrial mysticism that came to be known as the “New Age Movement.” At a pivotal moment in the mini-series, MacLaine (playing herself) sits on a beach with one of her spiritual advisors (played by actor John Heard) who urges her to recognize that all things are a part of God—a core belief of Hinduism. The two eventually stand, with arms outspread shouting to the sea, “I am God!,” “I am God!”

While I absolutely reject New Age concepts such as this that argue that all souls have a “God-Force” within them that must simply be unleashed, as the title of this study suggests, I would like to explore the Biblical sense in which each of us should realize the importance of allowing others to see God within us.

The God of the Bible

Ultimately, all sound concepts about God must be drawn from the Bible. **“It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps”** (Jer. 10:23b, NKJV). So, it cannot be that we simply tap into an inner “God-

Force.” Yes, the God of the Bible is said to **“fill heaven and earth”** (Jer. 23:24), but that is not because He *is* all things (the doctrine known as *pantheism*). Instead, it is because He *sees* and sustains all things—**“The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good”** (Prov. 15:3). The God of the Bible is *transcendent*, that is, “existing apart from and not subject to the limitations of the material universe” (*New Oxford American Dictionary*). What may be known of God is available to us because, **“the LORD revealed Himself”** (1 Sam. 3:21), to the inspired writers of Scripture. Thus, the Bible has, **“given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him”** (2 Pet. 1:3). Through it we may, **“be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”** (2 Tim. 3:17). That doesn’t mean we know every conceivable thing about God. He tells us, **“My thoughts are not your thoughts”** because, **“as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways high-**

er than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9). God has given us all we need, but we must learn to be content in the recognition that, **“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever”** (Deut. 29:29).

“Some Do Not Have the Knowledge of God”

While the Bible is the true source of what may be known about God, as Paul acknowledged, **“some do not have the knowledge of God”** (1 Cor. 15:34). So, how will they ever **“come to the knowledge of the truth”** (1Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 3:7)? Many hymnals include the beautiful song written by Annie Johnson Flint, entitled “The World’s Bible.” Its second stanza reads:

We are the only Bible
The careless world will read;
We are the sinner’s Gospel,
We are the scoffer’s creed;
We are the Lord’s last message,
Given in deed and word;
What if the type is crooked?
What if the print is blurred?

What Flint writes about the Bible may apply equally to God Himself. God does not personally *reveal Himself* today, as He did to inspired writers in the past. For some, before they ever even look to the pages of Scripture the concepts they form about God will be drawn from what they see in the lives of Christians. Consider how this can happen.

Children. A child learns about God from what he or she is taught by parents, grandparents, and teachers. Simple truths, such as **“God is love”** (1 John 4:8, 16) or **“God is faithful”** (1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18) will be etched into children’s hearts and minds by what they see in us about love and faithfulness.

Our Spouse. Whether both husband and wife come from backgrounds of faith, one is new to faith, or one has no faith, there are few relationships that have more impact on our spiritu-

al welfare than our relationship with our spouse. Although we should strive to be **“heirs together of the grace of life”** (1 Pet. 3:7) or that even if one does **“not obey the word”** the other **“may be won by the conduct”** of the other (1 Pet. 3:1), what my spouse sees in me can shape concepts about God and a willingness to be faithful to Him.

Neighbors and Co-Workers. People are always watching us. They know we are Christians and they see just how true we are to our faith. God’s nature doesn’t change when we are hypocrites, dishonest, immodest, or unkind, but all too often what others see in us shapes what they think about God. This is surely why an elder is to be a man who has **“a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil”** (1 Tim. 3:7). Wives are to obey their husbands, **“that the word of God may not be blasphemed”** (Titus 2:5). When people speak against God’s word they are speaking against Him. Believers generally are commanded to, **“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time”** (Col. 4:5).

Unbelievers. When Paul instructed the Corinthians about the proper use of spiritual gifts, he emphasized the need to guard their actions because of what it could communicate to the **“uninformed or unbelievers.”** Improper action could lead them to think Christians are *out of their minds*. Proper action could lead them to recognize **“God is truly among you”** (1 Cor. 14:23-25). Like children, our behavior can shape what others think about God.

Fellow Christians. Concerning the impact that sin and falsehood can have on other believers, Paul warned, **“a little leaven leavens the whole lump”** (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9). Again, one person’s wrongdoing doesn’t change who God is, but sadly, as our brothers and sisters look at us they often either grow in their love for God and confidence in His word, or start to ask themselves, “What’s the

point in serving God?” “Why should I stay faithful?” What they see of God living (or not living) in us can influence their own concepts of accountability to Him.

“God’s Fellow Workers”

In Shirley MacLaine’s mini-series, she first demonstrated a resistance to saying, “I am God,” feeling it would be arrogant or delusional to say such presumptuous words. Her hesitation was fitting. It is arrogant and delusional to imagine that we are God. Although we are His offspring (Acts 17:28-29) and bear His image (Gen. 1:26-27) we are not God! What was said of the Egyptians is true of all of us, we **“are men, and not God”** (Isa. 31:3).

Is it then equally arrogant and delusional to imagine that what others see in us can shape their own concepts about God? Well, perhaps if we allowed it to stop there. When Paul and Barnabas were in Lystra, when the residents imagined that they were gods, they at once declared, **“Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature**

as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them” (Acts 14:15). They used that as an opportunity to explain to the people the truth about the true and **“living God.”** I am not suggesting that we encourage others to shape their concepts of God on us. Instead, I am challenging us to recognize that our actions can help move people closer to the knowledge of the God revealed in Scripture, or move them further away from ever even considering Him.

The Bible teaches that as we obey Him, we participate in His work. Paul told

the Corinthians **“we are God’s fellow workers”** (1 Cor. 3:9). Christians are **“fellow workers for the kingdom of God”** (Col. 4:11). As Christians, while we have no innate **“God-Force”** within us, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are said to dwell within us (John 14:23; Rom. 8:9). We are led by His Spirit as we set our minds on the **“things of the Spirit”** (Rom. 8:5)—i.e., the things revealed in Scripture. His word **“effectively works”** in those who believe (1 Thess. 2:13). We strive to be **“imitators of God”** (Eph. 5:1), recognizing that His power works within us in ways beyond our understanding unto His glory (Eph. 3:20-21). We are **“workers together with Him”** (2 Cor. 6:1). This leaves no place for arrogance or delusion. In doing His will we realize, **“it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure”** (Phil. 2:13). Like Paul, our attitude must be, **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me”** (Gal. 2:20a). In this spirit, may each of us work diligently to allow the world to see a sound picture of God within the hearts and lives of each of us.



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