
Editorials

STUDY TO SHOW THYSELF APPROVED

People come to their crusades by the tens of thousands and watch their broadcasts by the hundreds of thousands. How do those like Benny Hinn and other Charismatic gurus acquire such large audiences? Many reasons come to mind, but paramount is biblical illiteracy.

The Apostle Paul, in his last and greatest discourse on discernment, instructed young Timothy to:

- "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13, KJV).
- "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV).
- "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14-15, KJV).

These principles are as important as ever. People are still led astray because they do not know the Scriptures. Believers today need to emulate the first-century Berean Christians of Acts 17, and exercise caution in whom they trust and follow and look to for doctrine and practice.

These religious celebrities surround themselves with the biblically uneducated. There is no greater example of this than Benny Hinn. Consider the following:

The pastor with a past: While Hinn was pastor at the Orlando Christian Center, the church he founded in Florida, he selected Kent Mattox as one of his associate pastors. Mattox says he came out of a lifestyle that was "so demon possessed" and that "every day of my life for over ten years I was high — whether it was marijuana or cocaine or speed or some type of drugs."

Mattox added:

"I'm so grateful to God that He put me in the ministry. I came to Orlando, I was in a service of about 2500 people and Pastor stopped preaching ... and he told me to stand up and he said, 'God's going to put you in the ministry.' He prophesied I would be in the ministry. Well, 18 months went by and I woke up one night. I just came out of a dream and I dreamed that the Second Coming was taking place. And I heard the Lord tell me, 'Preach My Word.' I didn't know how to do it. I didn't know where to go. I didn't even know all of the books in the Bible. I didn't know anything about it. And the Lord said, 'See Benny Hinn.' Well here I am, not knowing anything about the Christian walk, not knowing anything about the Word. I'm supposed to go tell Benny — Pastor Benny Hinn, God told me to see you, I'm going to preach. I thought it would be pretty stupid, you know. So I—it was amazing, that next two wee— two days later I was at a— an event they had at the church and, just out of the blue, Pastor walked up to me [with] his wife Suzanne and they said, 'The Lord spoke to us two days ago' — which was the same time I'd had that dream — 'and said you're to come on staff full time as one of our pastors.' And I've been doing it ever since."

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And the crusade crowd cheered for what they perceived was Hinn's noble strategy to take a former drug addict and make him a pastor — all the while ignorant of the Holy Spirit's command in 1 Timothy 3:6.

The confused judge: A Hinn devotee wrote to PFO defending him as "a true man of God." As she told PFO not to "throw stones" at Hinn unless we ourselves were "without sin," she employed what she thought was the biblical example of "the woman at the well when the people accused her of adultery." The writer confused two separate Bible accounts, the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4 and the woman caught in adultery in John 8. She also missed the context of John 8: that "stones" should not be cast against repentant people. It has nothing to do with discerning false teaching. Her letter also included — based upon Matthew 7:3-5 — the admonition for PFO not to judge. However, she missed the contradiction in that she was judging us for judging Hinn.

Hinn often seems as mixed up as his followers. Take, for example, the time he told a Trinity Broadcasting Network audience about the sermon he preached in which he made a correlation of Moses with the two disciples who met the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24).

"And I compared Moses and his boldness to ask, 'What is your name?' to God, and took the story of the two on the road to Emmaus who never once said, 'Who are you?' When Jesus was walking with them, there [was] not one time [when] they said, 'Well, how do you know all this?' and 'Where are you from?' And frankly missed an incredible opportunity. *And the Holy Spirit made it so clear to us that these two were never mentioned again in the Bible. It's almost like they were dis—dishonored. We don't even know who they are. To this day we do not know their names.* And it's very clear that God Almighty, seeing that they've missed their incredible opportunity to say, 'Who are you Lord?' *God wouldn't even honor them to give us their names"* (emphasis added).

Note first that Hinn — as he is accustomed to doing — attributes his interpretation to the Holy Spirit. Yet the account in Luke 24:13-35 is quite different from Hinn's. There are several basic facts that anyone with a rudimentary understanding of the Bible would have known and, as such, objected to Hinn's own ignorance of Scripture and irresponsible interpretation.

Consider just six facts from Scripture that Hinn omitted from his sermon: 1) One of the disciples *is* named: Cleopas (v. 18). 2) Their inability to discern that it was the Lord who walked with them was a result of divine intervention (vv. 16, 31). 3) The Lord went to great lengths to teach the pair from the Word (v. 27). 4) Their hearts burned as the Lord revealed the fulfilled Scrip-

tures to them (v. 32). 5) The two disciples were not dishonored, but are again distinguished to witness the resurrected Lord when He appeared to His group of apostles (vv. 33-36). 6) Although not by name, these disciples are mentioned again in God's Word, as they would certainly be part of the collective number who witnessed the resurrected Christ described by Paul (1 Corinthians 15:5-8).

It is, without doubt, ironic that Hinn would contort this exact scriptural record. In verse 27, Luke tells us, "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He *explained* to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself." The word "explained" in the text is the Greek word, *diemeneuo*, which is a strengthened form of the word for hermeneutics. Luke says Jesus carefully and thoroughly interpreted and explained the Word of God. Hinn does not.

But apparently ignorance breeds ignorance and this is why Hinn is able to get away with the above fractured exegesis, not to mention his declaration that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each have a body, spirit, and soul ("If I can shock you and maybe I should, there are nine of them."), the Red Sea divided by turning into ice, and that he is a little Messiah walking on earth.

Scripture repeatedly calls believers to discernment. Those who follow "God's Generals" miss this mandate and fall prey. While the adage states, "ignorance is bliss," ignorance has consequences. The biblical call for sound teaching is a call for healthy teaching. Sound doctrine has a good effect on the spiritual health of the Church and believers. It is a susceptible and sick Church that allows or embraces sick doctrine. No matter how charismatic these false teachers are in their personalities, Christians must never allow this magnetism to interfere with a desire to protect the integrity of Scripture and a demand for proper interpretation.

We're not saying that the Bible is calling all believers to earn doctorate degrees in theology, but it does charge that we correctly handle the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). We do this in our own lives in personal study and by those to whom we look for spiritual instruction. Paul, by trade, was a tentmaker. He knew that in making a tent, all the pieces had to be cut straight and exact to fit together properly. So, too, with Scripture: if you don't cut the pieces right, the theology doesn't fit.

Laurel Warwick, in the discernment devotional, *Water Round the Altar*, offers an applicable commentary on Ephesians 5:15 and a fitting conclusion:

"'Walk circumspectly,' the King James Version says. That is, we are to exercise careful consideration to avoid error or harmful consequences. 'Not as fools, but as wise... understanding what the will of the Lord is.' We must know Him, know His Word, and know His will."

—MKG