

# *Redwater Restorer*

*"The voice of one crying in the wilderness..." (Matthew 3:3)*

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## *The Unifying Heart (Part Two)*

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### **Services:**

Sunday  
Bible Class 10:00 a.m.  
AM Worship 10:45 a.m.  
PM Worship 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday  
Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

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Encampment  
June 6th-11th  
June 13th-18th  
June 20th-25th  
June 27th-July 2nd

It is God's desire that all Christians be unified (John 17:20-23). In previous articles we have noted two mindsets essential to attaining that unity. First we must have that "honest and good heart" (Luke 8:11-15). Second, we must have a sincere desire to learn God's word. We must study God's word (2 Timothy 2:15), and by such "prove all things, hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). With this mindset we can achieve the unity God desires. Unified not only with those of this century, but with those of the first century as well.

We have grown lazy in Bible study in the last few years. We have come to expect things and life to be easy. There is no shortcut to learning the Bible. You can't buy the *Cliff's Notes*. Without a determined, diligent, honest, hard working attitude we will never grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (2 Peter 3:18).

In order to study the Bible, we must renew our commitment to thinking and exercise our minds accordingly. We spend far too much time watching television programs which promote immorality, and even when the content is good, we often allow the television to "think" for us. Students in school prefer to be given the answers rather than work to arrive at the proper conclusion.

But life and thinking is not like this at all. It requires mental industry. Today, many think that learning is just soaking in information. If this were the case, where would we get the discoveries of tomorrow? It will not happen without someone choosing to think. There is peer pressure today in many fields, attempting to produce uniformity through conformity to the opinions of men. But peer pressure is just an excuse not to think and act for yourself. Thinking requires us to accept the facts even when they disagree with common thought. Disagreement itself does not make one courageous or thoughtful. It is the disagreement on the principle of truth that separates the thinker from the pack. But, unfortunately, thinkers are becoming a dying breed. We seem content just to limp along

and accept mediocrity in our schools, in our work and in our Bible study. But you can be an active, thinking Bible student. Now is the time to apply yourself. God expects us to be unified today!

### **Improper Attitudes for Bible Study**

Paul arrived in Athens to find a crowd gathered at Mars Hill. Taking the opportunity given to him, he preached a powerful sermon about "the unknown God." As he brought his lesson to a close, he emphasized the resurrection of Christ and the certainty of judgment to come.

"And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them" (Acts 17:32-34).

What made the difference in these three groups of people? They all heard the same sermon. They heard the same speaker. Yet some laughed at the sermon, others declined to commit one way or the other, while some truly believed. What was the difference between the three? Attitude!

Even today, different people can pick up the Bible and arrive at different conclusions. While in some cases the differences may be caused by inadequate preparation or poor skills, more often than not our attitudes sway us. Why? Our attitudes influence how we utilize or do not utilize the skills we possess. Our attitudes determine whether or not we will listen to a given point of view. Our attitude is the lens through which we study the Bible. If our lens itself is out of focus, it blurs the truth revealed in the Bible and distorts what we see, causing us not to see the truth, not because it is not there, but because our lens is out of focus.

When was the last time you seriously did some introspection regarding your attitudes toward the Bible? Take, as an example, the last time you were

## *The Unifying Heart (Part Two)*

upset by something someone said in regard to your religious beliefs, whether in a Bible class, a sermon or a personal encounter. Were you truly open to the point of view being presented to you? Were you upset afterwards? Why? Were you angry? Did you feel threatened? Now, how much time did you take to examine what the Bible said about it afterwards? Many times, we expose the dirt on our lens in Bible study when we fail to evaluate what the Bible says. We then complain about how dirty people look when we actually need to apply the cleaning cloth to our attitude (Matthew 7:1-5).

Attitude is important. It affects our approach to life, and, more important still, it affects our approach to the truth of God's Word. When we think we already know what God says, our attitude keeps us from learning. When we refuse to accept what God says, our attitude makes us dogmatic about our own opinions. We must make sure that we do not have any improper attitudes affecting our Bible study or we have condemned ourselves to willful ignorance, because improper attitudes will keep the truth away from our eyes, leaving us to live and operate in a self-created illusion that has so substance.

### **Pride in Bible Study**

Pride is one of those "attitude" sins that touch every area of life, and Bible study is no exception. The wise man said long ago, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). Whenever a Bible student begins his study thinking that he already knows the answers, his motive is wrong. Bible study is about learning what God has to say; not seeing whether or not he agrees with you. It is pride that causes us to suppose that we must be right and that creates the desire within us to try to control right and wrong; at least in our own minds.

When Paul preached in Thessalonica, "the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people" (Acts 17:5). The Jews' envy existed because of their arrogant presumption of spiritual superiority, which Paul had exposed by his preaching, and their jealousy at Paul's success. Their pride not only caused them to reject the Gospel themselves but to assault those who

accepted it. Sometimes, even today, people first become defensive, due to their pride, when their assumptions are challenged and then strike back offensively with verbal assaults and illogical arguments, once again from pride.

Earlier in Acts, when the apostles were preaching, the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem had shown the same disposition, "Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2). Later, among themselves, they acknowledged a miracle that had been performed, but, due to pride, they refused to admit their mistake publicly, and even tried to suppress any knowledge of the event. Some people may privately admit that their ideas, beliefs and teaching do not match the biblical record, but, at the same time, their pride keeps them from admitting this publicly or making the changes required. However, this problem generally stems from others. More common in personal Bible study is the belief that questioning previously held positions is a lack of faith or a sign of weakness. However, nothing is as strengthening and faith-building as the reassurance brought by an independent examination of the evidence. The only thing to lose by such an examination is an erroneous belief. However, in order to expose these, you must first be willing to lose your pride.

Pride convinces us that nothing is as important as our own position and blinds us to the value of truth. Pride makes us believe that we could not possibly be wrong. Pride keeps us from ever considering that we might have accepted an erroneous teaching. Therefore, as we approach Bible study, let us remember the apostle Paul's words, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Are you willing to develop the right heart needed to attain the unity God desires. With honesty (Luke 8:15) and mental industry (2 Timothy 2:15) that unity can be achieved. Join us in the search.

If you are interested in any of the following please check the appropriate box and mail to the address below. Please include return address and phone number if possible.

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