

# **FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION**

**— ARTICLES —**

**EPITOME OF HYPOCRISY**

**BIBLE CONCORDANCES**

**REMOVING OBSTACLES**

**LUKE CHAPTER 15**

**BE A GOOD LISTENER**

**UNDESIRABLE SIDE EFFECTS**

**THOUGHTS ON MARRIAGE**

**THE CONFLICT: LIGHT vs. DARKNESS**

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# **EPITOME OF HYPOCRISY**

**Offend: To cause displeasure, anger, resentment.**

“It Offends Me!”

Whenever these words are spoken others rush in to chastise the offender, or to remove what offends. Offenses are something that will not be tolerated. Whether it is some said, done, or implied, the offender is taken to task. Yes, this is the age of toleration, we must not be offensive. But wait, something seems awry. Something reeks with inconsistency. It's not all what is appears to be. It depends on who is being offended whether or not the offenders are chastised. As a matter of fact some who say they are offended are told to “get over it.” And who might these people be? People like me!

It offends ME!

It offends me when God's name is taken in vain.

It offends me when God's Son is portrayed in a bad light.

It offends me when others offend Christians.

Maybe it is because they know Christians won't use carnal weapons to fight back. Jesus' followers are taught, “*Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.*” Romans 12:17

## **AND WHAT AM I TOLD?**

I'm told to be tolerant of what is disgusting to God. I'm told to be tolerant when people want God dead, but don't want violent criminals dead. I'm told I need to stop whatever I'm doing because others are offended, but I'm told others do not have to stop because I am offended. The word hypocrisy comes to mind. Pretending to be tolerant while refusing to be tolerant of those who differ, is the epitome [i.e., having no equal or match] of hypocrisy.

[A THOUGHT: Would those who speak against Christianity be as bold to do so if Christians issued death threats to those who offend? If they desired the deaths of all those who dare to denigrate their leader or beliefs? If they used terror to install fear in their adversaries? The answer is obvious.]

### **FEARFUL WORDS**

The opponents of Christians may say all sorts of things against them, but in the end they will answer to God.

*“In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you; but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”* 1 Peter 4:4-5

### **COMFORTING WORDS**

Christians may be mistreated, but in the end they are blessed.

*“Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.”* Luke 6:22-23

### **WHAT THEN? TAKE HEART!**

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.  
Romans 8:18

*Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.* Hebrews 12:2-3

# **BIBLE CONCORDANCES**

I remember when I bought my first complete Bible concordance. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, a very large, heavy book. With it I was able to look up any word in the KJV of the Bible and find all the places where it is found. It was very handy. For example, I could find all the passages that contained, say, the word "spirit."

As I progressed in my studies of this word, I came to realize that the word was not used the same way in all passages. The meaning was varied, depending on the context.

Now, I'm not a Hebrew/Greek scholar, but it appeared to me that to lump together different verses containing the same word and conclude they all mean the same thing was inaccurate.

This should not be a surprise. We often use English words in different ways. Check out the word "get" in the dictionary. There are over twenty different meanings. The word "heart" has over ten definitions. The word "constitution" has several uses.

The Greek word, **pneuma**, is translated "spirit" in the New Testament.

## **HOLY SPIRIT**

*"The wind (pneuma) blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit (pneuma)."*

John 3:8

## **UNCLEAN SPIRITS, DEMONS**

*When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits (pneuma) with a word, and healed all who were ill.*

Matthew 8:16

## ANGELS

*But to which of the angels has He ever said, “sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”? Are they not all ministering spirits (pneuma), sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?*

Hebrews 1:13-14

## CHARACTER

*“It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit (pneuma) and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

Luke 1:17

## INVISIBLE PART OF MAN

*He [Jesus], however, took her by the hand and called, saying, “Child, arise!” And her spirit (pneuma) returned, and she got up immediately; and He gave orders for something to be given her to eat.*

Luke 8:54-55

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These are only a few selected passages. There are approximately 18 different uses (148 occurrences) of the Greek word *pneuma* translated “spirit” in the New Testament.

BRINGING IT HOME — Be aware. Concordance studies must be done carefully with consideration for the context. Failing to do so results in misconceptions and erroneous conclusions.



# **REMOVING OBSTACLES**

In the children's section of a zoo was a display of eggs being incubated. Under the warm lights the fertilized eggs reach the hatching stage. Visitors could watch the chicks as they peck open the eggs, and struggle with all their might to free themselves. Many of them have to pause and rest part way. Afterwards, they are exhausted from the struggle.

If it weren't for the glass enclosure, the observers would surely try to help the struggling chicks. What a favor could be done by breaking open the shell and lifting the new born out. What an opportunity to help. But it would not be beneficial.

## **NECESSARY ACTIVITY**

Pecking out of the egg is a necessary part of life for the chick. During this process the chick develops the stamina needed for what lies ahead. Scientists have discovered that chicks aided in extricating themselves from the shell are much weaker and have a higher mortality rate.

Similarly, people often seek to help others by removing obstacles and trials from their lives, believing that they are doing a favor. But frequently this makes the other person weaker and less able to handle what lies ahead.

## **HARD, BUT NOT TOO HARD**

Our first reaction to trials is that they are hard, difficult, and often painful and need to be avoided. But we must note that they may well serve a very useful purpose in our spiritual development.

James puts it this way, *"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith*

*produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” James 1:2-4*

The Apostles didn't relish being arrested and threatened. However, the experience strengthened their faith. After their second encounter with authorities, wherein they were beaten and ordered not to preach any more, *“they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.” Acts 5:41*

Paul, given a 'thorn in the flesh,' surely would have been better off without it (according to what he thought, and what we might think). The Lord knew better. Paul's affliction was necessary to make him better equipped. Realizing this he concluded, *“Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:9-10*

## **BRINGING IT HOME**

The lessons we learn are: [1] Do not pray that all trials be removed from your life. [2] Do not attempt to remove all obstacles from the paths of others—they may well need the test to strengthen their faith. [3] Face each trial with determination, resolve, and much prayer. Meet it head-on, thereby gaining perfection (completeness).

There are many situations wherein God's wisdom is far above ours. This is especially true in the struggles of chicks and in our encountering various trials.





## LUKE CHAPTER 15

To appreciate the full impact of the three parables in Luke chapter 15, one needs to understand the setting as found in the first two verses. It is in this setting that Jesus spoke these three parables. Each parable contains a lesson, but combined, there is a much greater lesson.

Tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him [Jesus].

The Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." (The Pharisees and scribes trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed [all] others with contempt. (Cf. Luke 18:9-12)

### **FIRST PARABLE: ONE LOST SHEEP FOUND**

The man rejoiced with friends and neighbors.

The Pharisees and scribes could relate to the rejoicing.

**The spiritual parallel:** *"That in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."*

### **SECOND PARABLE: ONE LOST COIN FOUND**

The woman rejoiced with her friends and neighbors.

The Pharisees and scribes could relate to the rejoicing.

**The spiritual parallel:** *"In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

### **THIRD PARABLE: ONE LOST SON FOUND**

The father rejoiced and planned a family feast. The older brother objected.

The Pharisees and scribes could not relate to the rejoicing.

Such rejoicing was inconsistent with their view of sinners. They were acting like the older brother.

**The spiritual parallel:** There is rejoicing in heaven when tax collectors and the sinners come to Jesus.

### **THE LESSON**

Self-righteousness causes one to be proud. To trust in oneself. To view others with contempt. To appear outwardly religious. To strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. To be strict in little things. And neglect justice, mercy, and faithfulness. (Echos of Matthew 23).

### **WORTH NOTING**

The body of Christ is composed of people from all walks of life. The Apostle Paul considered himself “chief of sinners.” Among those who became Christians on the day of Pentecost were individuals who had cried out, “Crucify him.”

It is said of the Christians at Ephesus: “... *Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*” Ephesians 2:1-3

It is said of the Christians at Corinth: “... *Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you ...*” 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

### **REJOICE!**

Rejoice with the one who was dead in sin and has begun to live; was lost and has been found. Do not focus on the person’s former life. It’s the new life that matters.

## **BE A GOOD LISTENER**

The teacher or preacher has a responsibility to teach or preach the gospel and nothing but the gospel. And the listener has a responsibility to make sure what is heard is in keeping with what the Bible says. Each responsibility provides a check to make sure that what is said and what is heard is in keeping with the Word. When either of the checks is missing the door is left open for error being taught and/or caught.

### **RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HEARERS**

*Now these [Bereans] were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.*

Acts 17:11

*But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.*

1Thessalonians 5:21

Here is a list of “red flag” words. Words that should sound the alarm to warn the listener that what follows is not based on Scripture but is based on personal beliefs, supposition, reason, or perception. Such statements and conclusions come from the mind of the speaker and not from the pages of the Bible.

I believe... Don't you suppose... It sounds reasonable... Probably... Most likely... Don't you think... The way I see it... It doesn't say that, but... Surely it must be... and others you may think of.

It is imperative that the listener develop a keen sense of hearing to make sure what is being taught actually is contained in the Bible. Whether the Bible is being taught in a class, a sermon, a gospel paper, or wherever. It will take practice, but the results

can be most beneficial. It's a good defense against any teaching, idea, or opinion being received as having a biblical basis.

### **ADMONITION**

*You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

2 Peter 3:17-18



# **UNDESIRABLE SIDE EFFECTS**

A pharmaceutical company made a major breakthrough. They produced a pill that would prevent the common cold. Elated, many began taking the pills. But they soon found out there were some undesirable side-effects – nothing life threatening or severe – just undesirable. Fearing rejection of the new medicine, the pill was reformulated to remove the undesirable side effects. Well, the rest is history. Millions began taking the pills. Everyone was basking in the blissfulness of such wonderful medicine.

Then it happened! One person who was taking the medicine faithfully came down with a cold. Was this a fluke? Then others who took the pills came down with colds. It soon became evident that the pills were not effective in preventing colds after all. What happened? In checking the ingredients of the pills, it was discovered that when the product was reformulated to remove the undesirable side-effects, it also removed the effectiveness in preventing colds. [This story is fictitious, but it illustrates a vital point.]

## **A PARALLEL SCENARIO**

Jesus Christ made a major breakthrough. By His sacrificial death, He was able to offer salvation to all mankind. He presented His prescription for salvation to mankind through His Word. Elated, many decided to accept His offering. But they found there were some undesirable side-effects (such as obligations, commands to keep, things to be believed, etc.).

Fearing rejection, some of those dispensing the good news reformulated it so as to remove the undesirable side-effects. Well, the rest is history. Many joined the ranks of those who liked the more palatable “prescription.”

On the day of judgment they eagerly awaited to hear the words, “enter in.” One person who had joined the ranks came face-to-face with the Lord, and the Lord did not know him. Was this a fluke? Then another, and another, who had joined the ranks also were unknown to the Lord. They were rejected forthright. It became apparent that the reformulated prescription had lost its effectiveness (i.e., it was powerless to save).

What happened? In checking the ingredients of the beliefs they held, it was discovered that when the Gospel was reformulated to remove the undesirable side-effects, its ability to save souls was also removed.

Do you think this couldn't happen? Read on!

*“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”* Matthew 7:22-27

### **A LESSON TO BE LEARNED**

The Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth has the power to save. “Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth.” John 17:17

# THOUGHTS ON MARRIAGE

## PREPARATIONS

Jeremiah's rhetorical question, (2:32) "*Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?*," came to mind the other day while I was in a restaurant. I overheard a young woman talking about the details of her upcoming wedding. Everything had to be just right; it must be a "perfect" wedding.

Yes, to the bride, the details of the wedding ceremony are very important. I wondered, though, if she and her prospective husband had thought much about making their marriage "just perfect."

Wedding preparations are fine, but what about marriage preparation? Many hours and days are spent in preparation for a wedding ceremony which is over in less than an hour. But the union is forever (that's the way it's supposed to be). How much time and thought are spent in preparing for it?

## VOWS

Many couples are very particular about the vows they make to each other. That is as it should be. Much thought is given to the content. Some write their own vows to make them more personal. But how much thought is given to keeping those vows of undying love and affection "until death do us part"?

It appears to many that their marriage vows fall into the category of "convenient items." That is, they will keep their vows as long as it suits their needs. When the union is no longer what they want, it is merely disposed of. Wedding vows are probably broken more often than all other vows. Proverbs 20:25: "*It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider his vows.*"

## **BROKEN VOWS**

Why is it so painful when couples divorce? Because a “body” is being torn apart. Mark 10:7-8: *“for this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one flesh...”* Marriages don’t “break up,” they are broken up by one or both parties. A “break up” implies that something beyond their control caused it. “It just happened to us.” “We just fell out of love.” “It just wasn’t working out.” Such ideology relieves those involved of any responsibility. Bodies need care and attention to remain healthy, and so does the marriage bond. Ephesians 5:33: *“Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband.”* Proverbs 5:18-20: *“And rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe. Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; be exhilarated always with her love. For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress, and embrace the bosom of a foreigner?”*

## **THE CYCLE MUST BE BROKEN**

It’s hard to convince children that marriage is for life when many parents are in their second or third union. Children are affected more by what parents and other adults do than what they say. It’s tragic enough when worldly people freely divorce and remarry, but it’s even worse when Christians follow in the steps of the worldly rather than in the steps of the Lord.

We may never see the end of divorce and remarriage among the population. But it can and must be stopped among those who follow Christ. Those who are married need to be determined to keep their vows at all costs. The union must be kept pure, Hebrews 13:4, *“Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral...”*



## **SHOW AND TELL**

Those who are unmarried need to hear this message. And it is the responsibility of parents and all concerned adults to show, as well as tell, the next generation the “facts of marriage.”



# **THE CONFLICT: LIGHT VS. DARKNESS**

## **The darker the night, the brighter the light.**

In the darkness, it is said that a lit match can be seen at least a mile away, but during the daytime it is unseen even a short distance away.

Living in a small town during the mid twentieth century, it was the talk of the town when a man decided to divorce his wife. Why such a furor? Because it was frowned upon by the people who lived there. Marriage was considered to be a life-time commitment. Their view of divorce was similar to the Bible's teaching of divorce.

In the last 50-75 years the morals of society in general have been drifting away from the morals taught in the Bible. Such drifting has caused a rift between those who hold to Bible principles and those who do not. And the rift continues to grow.

Today, for example, divorce is condoned and practiced by many. This change is accompanied by a number of other moral issues. Anyone who frowns upon divorce stands out like a bright light in the darkness. As Christians, we need to understand what is happening and why it is happening today. The accusations against us. The opposition to us. And the hatred of us. Why? A look at some passages in the New Testament helps us understand.

## **CHRISTIANS BEING MALIGNED IS TO BE EXPECTED**

When one decides to live as a Christian today, his or her conduct will be spoken against. All sorts of evil, harmful, and often untrue statements will be hurled against you. Your decision to "march to the beat of a different drummer" infuriates those who

do not love God. To them you are out-of-step, not them. Their beat (political correctness) is far different from that of a Christian.

*For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you.*

1 Peter 4:3-4

### **OPPOSITION IS TO BE EXPECTED**

Godliness and worldliness are antagonistic to each other, just as light is to darkness. One's faith will be put to the test. Expect it!

*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.*

1 Peter 4:12

### **HATRED IS TO BE EXPECTED**

Strong emotions will be displayed in words and actions against Christians. A Christian's strong love for the truth will be met with a strong hatred of the stand you take.

*Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.*

1 John 3:13

### **WHY IS IT HAPPENING?**

*"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."*

John 3:19-20

[NOTE: It's interesting these words closely follow the well known verse (3:16): "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."]

### **WHAT TO DO?**

Don't be ashamed. Be blessed. Glorify God. Make sure that any suffering you experience is because you are a Christian, not for wrong-doing.

*If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.*

1 Peter 3:14-16

Don't wish for the opposition to go away. Realize trials that test your faith will come. And when properly endured, they strengthen your faith.

*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

James 1:2-4

### **LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE!**

*"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."*

Matthew 5:14-16

