

IF – The Little Big Word

Proverbs 14:12

INTRODUCTION:

A. Among the statements of the Restoration Movements . . . “Calling Bible things by Bible names and doing Bible things in Bible ways.” Not always done.

B. Terms that divide and injure . . .

1. Sometimes we hear such terms as:

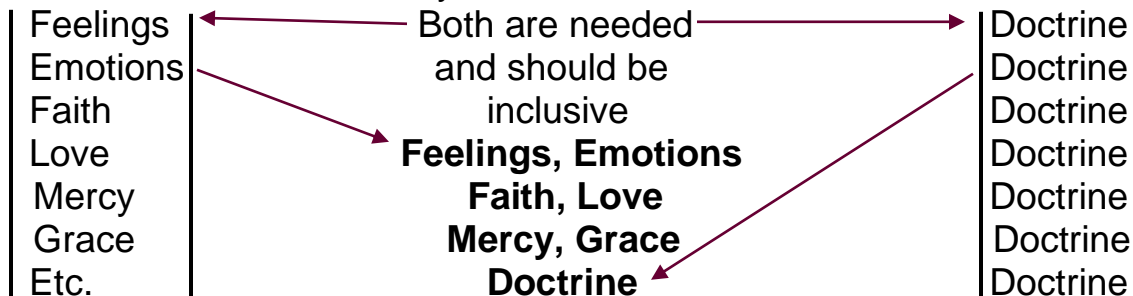
- a. “**Liberal**” (used once) 2 Cor. 9:13 – “liberal sharing” (Generous sharing of the gospel)
- b. “**Conservative**” - (Not found in Bible)
- c. “**Anti**” (**ultra conservative**) (Not found in Bible)
- d. “**Traditional**” (Not found in Bible)
- e. “**Contemporary**” – (Not found in Bible)

2. Sometimes the Christian may be accused of being **narrow-minded** (Not found in Bible) because he insists that we MUST completely obey Christ. Yet, all of life is narrow. Examples . . .

- a. No room for broad-mindedness in the chemical laboratory. Water is composed of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen. Deviation is forbidden.
- b. There is no room for broad-mindedness in music. There are only eight notes in an octave.
- c. In the mathematics classroom, things are narrow. Geometry, calculus, nor trigonometry allows zero variation from accuracy. The solution to the problem is either right or it is wrong.
- d. On the athletic field the game is played by the rules.
- e. How then, shall we expect that broad-mindedness shall rule in the realm of Christianity and morals?

3. We have but to open our Bibles and read its pages of Bible history to see the vast body of evidence and multitudes of examples of people rejecting God’s way in favor of the changes they wanted God to make and have God accept. **They put their will in place of God’s will!**

4. Two varied tendencies today



5. Biblical authority is firmly established in Heaven’s sight.

- a. **Matthew 21:25** – “The baptism of John where was it from? From heaven or from men?”
 6. In matters of religion people will either do what **GOD** says or they will do what **MEN** say.
 7. If it is from God **it is** in the Bible!
 8. The Bible is indeed **our only source of authority** for all matters in religion.
- B. The Bible says:
1. “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.” **Proverbs 14:12**
 2. “A fool’s way is right in his own eyes, but whoever listens to counsel is wise.” **Proverbs 12:15**
 3. “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” **John 8:32**
 - a. In order to be saved eternally in Heaven, we must:
 1. Learn the **TRUTH**.
 2. Believe that **TRUTH** is from God.
 3. Obey that **TRUTH**.
 - b. Truth is to be derived from what God’s Word says rather than:
 1. What man **thinks** God’s Word says.
 2. What man **feels** God’s Word says.
 3. What man tries to do to **change** God’s Word to make it say what he wants it to say.
 4. **1 Peter 3:15** – “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”
- C. If we understand truth, we will **ALL** understand it alike.
1. The religious world today is religiously confused and religiously divided. However . . . Jehovah God is not a God of confusion. **1 Corinthians 14:33** – “God is not a God of disorder [confusion] but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”
 2. Jesus prayed for unity . . . That all would be one in Him. **John 17:20-21** – “I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in Me through their message. May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so the world may believe You sent Me.”
 3. Division is decisively condemned in **1 Corinthians 1:10-13** – “Now I urge you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all say the same thing, that there be no divisions among you, and that you be united with the same understanding and the same conviction. ¹¹ For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers, by members of Chloe’s household, that there are quarrels among you. ¹² What I am saying is this: each of you says, ‘I’m with Paul,’ or ‘I’m with Apollos,’ or ‘I’m with Cephas,’ or ‘I’m with

Christ.’¹³ Is Christ divided? Was it Paul who was crucified for you? Or were you baptized in Paul’s name?

D. What does the Bible say about the importance of doctrine?

1. **God’s doctrine is good doctrine.** Proverbs 4:2 – “For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law.”
2. **Jesus’ doctrine is God’s doctrine.** John 7:16 – “Jesus answered them and said, ‘My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.’”
3. **God’s doctrine can be known.** John 7:17 – “If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.”
4. **God’s doctrine can be obeyed.** Romans 6:17 – “But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.”
5. **Division is caused when ideas contrary to God’s doctrines are followed.** Romans 16:17 – “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.”
6. **Nothing but the gospel doctrine of God, rather than false doctrine, is to be preached.** 1 Timothy 1:3 – “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia -- remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine.”
7. **God’s doctrine is called good doctrine.** 1 Timothy 4:6 – “If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.”
8. **Attention is to be given to God’s doctrine.** 1 Timothy 4:13 – “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”
9. **Christians are to continue in God’s doctrine.** 1 Timothy 4:16 – “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”
10. **Some will not endure sound doctrine.** 2 Timothy 4:3-4 – “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers. And they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”
11. **Those who do not follow God’s doctrine do not have God.** 2 John 9 - “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”

12. **What some call doctrine is nothing more than the teachings of men.** **Matthew 15:9** – “And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”
 13. **People get carried away with false doctrines.** **Hebrews 13:9** - “Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines.”
 14. **Brethren, believe, follow, and teach only sound doctrine.** **Titus 2:1** – “But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine.”
- E. The Bible clearly establishes the importance of sound doctrine.
1. **Isaiah 1:8** – “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord”
 2. **Proverbs 4:12** – “For I give you good doctrine”
 3. **2 Corinthians 12:6** – “. . . For I will speak the truth.”
 4. **John 8:32** – “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
 5. **Ephesians 4:15** – “. . . Speaking the truth in love”
 6. **2 Timothy 4:2** – “Preach the Word”
 7. Paul warned Timothy in **2 Timothy 4:3** – “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine”
- F. With these thoughts in mind, permit me to introduce you to a little big word that should challenge us to think about good and sound doctrine . . . **IF**. The little big word.
1. Little in that it is only two letters in length
 2. Big in that it can make the difference between:
 - a. Truth and Error
 - b. Obeying God and disobeying God
 - c. Being saved and being lost
 - d. Being in Heaven or being in Hell

Note: That little big word is that important!
 3. Definition: “In the event that” “Allowing that **On condition that.**”
 4. How important is IF? “If” appears in the Bible some **1,637** times.
 - a. **1,006** times in the Old Testament.
 - b. **631** times in the New Testament.
- G. Our study will consist of asking simple questions then establishing what the Bible says about the matters. Bear in mind
1. “IF” is a subordinating conjunction It does not stand alone.
 2. The question method is both practical and thought-provoking. There are some **3,294** questions recorded in the Bible.
 3. The value of questions.
 - a. To seek information.
 - b. To elicit a response.
 - c. To get a person’s attention.
 - d. To make a person think. “I hadn’t thought of it that way before.”
 - e. To arrive at truth.

IF all churches are right, why does the Bible make it so plain that there is only one?

- **Colossians 1:18-19** – He is the head of the body, the church . . .
- **Ephesians 1:22-23** – And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body . . .
- **1 Corinthians 12:20** – But now indeed there are many members, yet one body . . .
- **Ephesians 4:4** – There is one body . . .
- **1 Corinthians 12:13** – For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free -- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.
- **Matthew 16:18** – . . . Upon this rock I will build My church . . .

IF all ways are acceptable, why did Jesus say that only those who follow the strait and narrow way will receive eternal life?

- **Matthew 7:13-14** – "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

IF Jesus is the head of churches (plural), why did He say, “I will build my church (singular)?

- **Matthew 16:18** – . . . Upon this rock I will build My church . . .

IF Christ wanted different denominations, each believing and teaching different things, then why did He pray for unity?

- **John 17:21** – That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

IF the Bible can show you proof positive that Jesus Christ was the founder of the true and only Church, His Church, will you accept the Bible and the Bible alone?

- **Matthew 16:18** – . . . Upon this rock I will build My church . . .
- **Luke 24:45-47** – And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,

47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

- **Acts 2:47** – And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.
- **Ephesians 1:22-23** – And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body . . .
- **Ephesians 5:25** – . . . Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

IF Christ promised salvation out of the Church, then why did He die for the Church?

- **Acts 20:28** – Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
- **Ephesians 5:25** – . . . Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.

IF the Church has nothing to do with our salvation, then why does the Lord Himself add us to it?

- **Acts 2:47** – And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved

IF one is saved by believing/“faith only,” why were the believing demons not saved?

- **James 2:19** – You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe -- and tremble!

IF one can be saved without faith, why did the Hebrew writer say

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”?

Hebrews 11:6

IF one becomes a Christian when he believes, then why was King Agrippa not a Christian?

- **Acts 26:27-28** – “King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.” Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”

IF faith comes in answer to prayer for everybody, then why are

we told that “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”?

Romans 10:17

IF “faith alone is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort” (as the Methodist Discipline says), why did James say, “Faith without works is dead”? [James 2:20](#)

IF one can be saved without complete obedience to the gospel of Christ, why did Paul say that Christ is to take vengeance on them that obey not the Gospel?

- [2 Thessalonians 1:8](#) – In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

IF one can be saved by obeying the doctrines and commandments of men, why did Christ say it was vain worship to follow them?

- [Matthew 15:9](#) – And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.
- [Mark 7:7](#) – And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

IF one can be saved by just believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, why did Jesus say, “Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”? [Matthew 7:21](#)

IF Christ will save anyone as long as they are sincere and good, why did the Hebrew writer state explicitly that Christ is the Savior of those who obey Him?

- [Hebrews 5:8-9](#) – Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,

IF the Lord will save people without baptism, then why is it commanded in the Bible?

- [Acts 10:47](#) – “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”
- [Acts 2:38](#) – Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin . . .”
- [Acts 22:16](#) – Now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

IF the Lord has promised salvation without baptism, why did Peter say that baptism now saves us?

- **1 Peter 3:21** – There is also an antitype which now saves us – baptism . . .

IF the Lord will save without baptism, why did Paul put “newness of life” after baptism, and not before?

- **Romans 6:4** – Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

IF we can receive remission of sins without baptism, why did an inspired apostle, Simon Peter, say that baptism is for the remission of sins?

- **Acts 2:38** – Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins . . .”

IF baptism has nothing to do with salvation, why did one of the Lord’s inspired preachers tell a sinner to “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”? **Acts 22:16**

IF a person can be saved without being baptized, why did Jesus NOT say, “He that believes and is NOT baptized shall be saved”?

- **Mark 16:16** – He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

IF we can get into Christ without baptism, why did Paul say we are baptized into Christ?

- **Galatians 3:27** – For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

IF sprinkling, pouring, and immersion are all scriptural baptisms, why did Paul say there is only one baptism and that it is a burial?

- **Ephesians 4:5** – There is one baptism . . .
- **Romans 6:4** – Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
- **Colossians 2:12** – Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

IF we can get into the body of Christ without baptism, why did Paul say we are baptized into one body?

- **1 Corinthians 12:13** – For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free -- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.
- Please remember that the body and the church are ONE.
 - **Colossians 1:18** – He is the head of the body, the church
 - **Ephesians 1:22-23** – And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body . . .

IF baptism is a “Christian duty,” can you locate a reference in the Bible that gives ONE example where a Christian was ever commanded to be baptized?

IF one is saved before baptism, then isn’t he saved before his sins are Remitted?

- **Acts 2:28** – Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins . . ."

IF one is saved before baptism, then isn’t he saved before his sins are Washed away?

- **Acts 22:16** – And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

IF men have a right to make religious laws, change them, or delete them, why did Christ say He had all authority?

- **Matthew 28:18-20** – And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

IF the Word of God is able to save men, what need do we have of anything else?

- **John 8:32** – And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
- **John 17:17** - Sanctify them by your truth, your word is truth.

- **Acts 20:32** – So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified

IF the Word of God is complete and furnishes us unto every good work, how can we make it better by adding to it or subtracting from it?

- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,
17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
- **Revelation 22:18-19** – For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;
19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

IF preachers have the right to preach their opinion, why then did Paul command them to “Preach the word”?

- **2 Timothy 4:2** – Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

IF creeds and manuals are necessary, why are we told to follow and obey the “perfect law of liberty”?

- **James 1:25** – But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.
- **Matthew 7:21** – Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

IF one can be a Christian, worship God acceptably, practice every Biblical Principle of Christianity, live, die, and go to Heaven without ever hearing of, belonging to, or in any way supporting a denomination, then are not these divisive denominational groups useless and unnecessary?

- **1 Corinthians 12:27** – Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
- **Matthew 16:18** – . . . Upon this rock I will build My church . . .
- **Acts 2:47** – . . . And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

IF and when one searches the Bible and fails to find the name of his denomination on the pages of inspired Scripture, why should he remain in it?

- **1 Corinthians 1:10-13** – Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.

Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ."

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

IF one thinks a man has a right to prefix his name with “Reverend,” “Father,” “Master,” etc., where can a passage be produced that authorizes it?

- **Psalm 111:19** – . . . Holy and reverend is His name. (Refers to God's name)
- **Matthew 23:8-12** – But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for one is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.
 - 9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for one is your Father, He who is in heaven.
 - 10 And do not be called teachers; for one is your Teacher, the Christ.
 - 11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.
 - 12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

IF instrumental music is to be used in the worship services, why was it omitted by Paul as he wrote “In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”? **Hebrews 2:12**

IF instruments should be used, why did Paul omit it again in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19?

- **Colossians 3:16** – Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
- **Ephesians 5:19** – Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

IF there is nothing in a name, why did Peter say in Acts 4:10-12 that salvation was in the name of Christ? And further, why did Paul declare that whatever we do is to be done in the name of the Lord?

- **Acts 4:10-12** – Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.
11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'
12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
- **Colossians 3:17** – And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

IF the Word of God authorizes elders to oversee (Acts 20:28) and deacons to serve and work (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1), what Scripture gives authority for ecclesiastical heads, councils, synods, cardinals, popes, etc., as various religious groups so incorporate? None . . . Not a single Scripture!

IF a person cannot fall from grace, as some religious groups believe, why did Peter say that one can be “. . . again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire’”?

2 Peter 2:20-22

IF one can be eternally saved without being faithful (“once in grace, always in grace”), why did the Lord say to be “faithful unto death”? Revelation 2:10

IF Hebrews 10:9 and Ephesians 2:15 teach that the law (Law of Moses) was done away and the new law (Gospel of Christ) was established, why do some today continue to keep the Sabbath day (Saturday)?

- **Hebrews 10:9** – . . . He takes away the first that He may establish the second.
- **Ephesians 2:15** – He did away with “the law of commandments contained in ordinances/regulations . . .”

IF the kingdom of God (the church) is yet to be built, why did Paul and John say they were in it?

- **Colossians 1:13-14** – He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,
14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.
- **Revelation 1:9** – I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom . . .

CONCLUSION:

A. Some final thoughts.

1. **IF it really doesn't make any difference what a man believes so long as he is sincere, why are we told that we will be damned if we believe not the truth?**
 - **2 Thessalonians 2:12** – . . . That they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth.
2. **IF God promised to save all, regardless of what they do, why did Paul say, “We persuade men”?** **2 Corinthians 5:1**
3. **IF there is no punishment for the wicked after death, why did Christ say certain ones would go into everlasting punishment?**
 - **Matthew 25:46** - And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.
4. **IF you are lost and condemned in judgment, will it be the fault of God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit, since they all want you to obey the Gospel?**
 - **2 Peter 3:9** – The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.
 - **Revelation 22:17** – And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

B. I hope these forty plus “IF questions” have challenged you to think . . .

1. In your personal life before God.
2. In your desire to help others come to a knowledge of the truth.

C. God's Plan for Man's Salvation