

A Church of One

Rick Railston

Recorded on June 25, 2022

When I first heard Herbert W. Armstrong in 1964, I was a dirt-poor graduate student in college and my entertainment was listening to a little transistor radio. I came across the World Tomorrow broadcast and I heard Mr. Armstrong for the first time. I think all of you can remember him saying,

“Blow the dust off the Bible and prove whether what I say is true or not”.

I remember him saying that over and over when we came into the church. When God Almighty called us, all of us did that. We got our Bibles out and we proved that the Sabbath was the day that ought to be kept and we proved the Holy Days and the list went on. We proved the core doctrines and I think most of us accepted a number of other doctrines that we really didn't prove. But we thought, we have the core here and then we read a booklet and said, “That makes sense.” We believe it and then moved on from there.

Then in February of 1986 Mr. Armstrong died, and as we all know, those of us who were there back then in the 1990's, heretical doctrinal changes entered into the Worldwide Church of God. As a result, many of us began to go back and reprove the doctrines that we had been given, in light of these heretical changes that were coming in—the trinity, the Sabbath changed to Sunday and all of that. Those of us who were there at that time remember that well. We began going back and restudying as a reaction to the heresy that seemed to come into the church, wave after wave at that time. As a result of that, a great exodus from the Worldwide Church of God occurred over the next five years. Then, as a result of people doing their own study and then people following people, over the past thirty years the number of “off shoots” from the Worldwide Church of God is well past 500—some say 600 or 700.

Since Pacific began, we have encouraged and empowered brethren to do the following in 2 Timothy 2:15—a very familiar scripture. This is something that we have encouraged brethren to do because we want all of us to focus on our Father's Word and understand what is in our Father's Word.

2 Timothy 2:15 *Study to shew thyself approved unto God [all of us want to be approved by God the Father], a workman [indicating that study requires work] that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (KJV)*

In our study, we should *rightly divide the word of truth*. What does *dividing* mean? The Greek word for *dividing* is Strong's #3718 and it literally means “to make a straight cut”. But then figuratively, it means “to dissect correctly the divine message”. When you say “dissect” an animal as we did in biology class, you understand what's inside. You understand the details. You look at the composition of what's being dissected. That's

the implication here; when we study, we want to dissect God's Word and look at it very carefully. Our job is to study to prove what the Bible actually says and not what a human being says it says. What does the Bible actually say? Why are we to individually do that? To individually study to do that? Because our salvation depends on it. Notice Philippians 2:12, another very familiar scripture. Something we have read, each one of us, many, many times. We understand that we cannot enter the Kingdom of God on somebody's coattails or some organization's coattails.

Philippians 2:12 *Wherefore, my beloved, [this tells you Paul's affection for God's people] as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. (KJV)*

That's an instruction for all of us that we should take very seriously. There's one Greek word for the English words *work out* and that is Strong's #2716 and it has a little different connotation than just the English words *work out*. It means "to do work fully; to accomplish or by implication to finish". In other words, it's to complete—you work to complete something so we can be saved on that day. Notice at the end of the verse we are to do so with *fear and trembling*. What is the *fear and trembling* part? Why should *fear and trembling* be part of that? The Greek word for *fear* is Strong's #5401 and is the Greek word *phobos* from where we get our English word "phobia" and it means "to be exceedingly afraid" and it can also mean "terror". Then the Greek word for *trembling* is Strong's #5156 and is the Greek word *tromos* and it means "quaking with fear". So this is not some kind of *mild* fear or a little bit of anxiety or something like that. It says we are to work out our own salvation with "exceptional fear". Why is that? Because there can be a great danger in working out our own salvation. There's danger involved, otherwise we wouldn't be warned by Paul saying do so in *fear and trembling*.

The reason there is great danger is because Satan is right there to mislead us. To steal us away from the truth, to kill us and to destroy us as the parable of the sheepfold tells us in John 10. Satan is there to mislead because he wants to steal us away from the truth. He wants to steal us away from God Almighty and His Son. As we study to rightly dissect the truth, as we work out our own salvation, we have to do so with *fear and trembling* because Satan is attempting to do with us, just what he did with Adam and Eve. Remember what he said?

"I know this is what God said, but this is not what He means."

Then he went on to deceive them. He is attempting to do that within the 500 plus offshoots of the Worldwide Church of God—deceiving people into following people, deceiving people to get them off track doctrinally. If he can do that, then he can ultimately destroy us. That's why Paul is saying:

Study to show yourself approved... but be very careful—do it with... *fear and trembling*.

As we've seen, there are some things to be careful about in working out our own salvation and particularly in the studying our Father's Word. That's precisely what we

want to cover today. To talk about being careful as we study our Father's Word, which leads to the title for today:

A Church of One

We're going to have seven points. The title may sound odd for a title, but we'll get to the point later. We're going to talk about things to be careful about when we study.

1. We must approach doctrinal study with a neutral mind.

I use the word "neutral" rather than "open" because to me, "open" implies you will let anything come in. If we have an open mind then we can just Heinz 57 it and let anything come in. We know from experience that we cannot let everything into our minds—we can't do that. Some of the things coming in come from Satan and need to be rejected. That's why I say a *neutral mind* rather than an *open mind*.

Let's look at an example of how study should be approached. I think you know where we're going—Acts 17:10 out of the New King James. This is the account of Paul encountering the Bereans.

Acts 17:10 *Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.*

11) These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (NKJV)

They were fairer minded, they were more neutral and they said, "Let's listen to what the man has to say and then let's look at scripture and see if it backs it up."

12) Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. (NKJV)

The point is, we have to approach any subject in God's Word that comes our way or that we want to study, to see what the Almighty is saying, not what we want to hear. That's very important. Sometimes we can go into a study with a preconceived notion with the way we think it ought to be, or with the way we think God ought to behave, or what God ought to teach. But instead, we should go in with a neutral mind—to seek the truth. Look at Jeremiah 5:1. I think this applies to Ancient Israel, but it also applies to the church today and frankly, to the world today. It's amazing how a sermonette and a sermon can tie in together—Gordon and I did not discuss our subjects today but they just link like this.

Jeremiah 5:1 *Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. (KJV)*

He said *if you find a man, I'll pardon it*. The implication here is, that there weren't very many seeking the truth. It's sad to say, that within the churches of God today, or within the world today, within our nation today, there are people with a lot of different opinions and biases. But it's increasingly rare to see somebody who ignores all that blabber and seeks the truth; who looks and tries to find the truth. Let's see what Christ had to say about that in John 10:27, just one verse. Christ is speaking, we are seeing a source of the truth.

John 10:27 *My sheep hear my voice, [in other words, they hear what He is saying and understand what He is saying] and I know them, and they follow me:* (KJV)

They hear what He says, hear His commandments, see His example and then follow Him. Go back two chapters to chapter 8:12.

(Hang on just a minute—I just transposed a page of my notes. I'm going to recover that in just a minute. I was finishing up this first point that we must approach doctrinal study with a neutral mind, let me finish that first, I didn't quite finish that.)

We need to study with a neutral mind, without bias, with the goal to see where the truth lies. As I said, it's a huge error to enter into a study with some kind of bias, one way or another. I've learned over the years, whether I'm preparing a sermon or just studying a subject, just to look up all the scriptures on a particular subject—write them down or print them out—and see what they say. I ask myself, what is God trying to tell us? What is He trying to show us. Sometimes these scriptures come together in groups or principles or a sub-subject within a greater subject. That's what works for me. But we want to see what our Father's Word says about a given subject. So, ending the first point, our study should seek the truth with an open mind.

That leads us to the second point. Something that is fundamental to our study.

2. The Father and His Son reveal scripture; humans do not.

That is something absolutely fundamental. Look at 2 Peter 1:20. This out of the New Living Translation; it's an eye-opening translation on this scripture. This is not an unfamiliar scripture.

2 Peter 1:20 *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, 21) or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.* (NLT)

Whether it's a prophecy or a doctrinal truth, they are revealed by the Father through His Spirit. It is not about a human being. Our Father and His Son can inspire a human being to speak the truth or write the truth, as we see all throughout scripture. But it doesn't come from a man at all. Therefore, we should have our confidence and our trust in our Father's Word and in Him and His Son and what They say. Notice Psalm 118:8;

Gordon, in his sermonette, had a couple of scriptures that pertain to this very subject. I'll give a couple of different ones. Something that is fundamental and something we cannot ever, ever ignore.

Psalm 118:8 *It is better to trust in the LORD [God Almighty, Yehovah] than to put confidence in man. (KJV)*

Boy, do we need to learn that. Our truth, our understanding, has to come from God Almighty. Notice James 1:17, where he tells us about the Father and where our light, our understanding and our knowledge should come from.

James 1:17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above [it doesn't come from a human], and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (KJV)*

Remember, David said to Yehovah,

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path".

We're reading here that God Almighty is the Father of lights Who lights our path, it gives us understanding. David said that in Psalm 119.

Now we come back to John 10:27 where we turned to earlier—*My sheep hear my voice and I know them that follow Me*. That's when Christ also said in John 8:12,

"I'm the light of the world".

Let's go to John 8:12—He's speaking to the Scribes and Pharisees in verse 3. That is who He is addressing.

John 8:12 *Then spake Jesus again unto them [the Scribes and Pharisees], saying, I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (KJV)*

We understand that Christ came to do the will of His Father; there are so many scriptures that show that over and over. He could do nothing except what His Father told Him to do and taught Him to do. He did add a spiritual dimension to the law. For example, in the sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, He said it's possible to commit adultery in your mind, not just by your body. He therefore added that spiritual dimension. Then He changed some laws. You can see that in Matthew 5, with the coming of the New Covenant. How many times did He say, "You have heard that it has been said" and then He says, "But I say unto to you" and He changed some laws in that regard and that's a totally different subject. The point I'm making is, closing out this second point, it is the Father and His Son Who reveal scripture, not human beings. This has to be a fundamental understanding when we pursue our studies into God's word.

The third point.

3. It is an error to put our trust in what people say about scripture.

I'm not saying you shouldn't read what somebody else says about scripture or investigate what somebody else says about scripture. But it is an error when we put our trust in what they say because they are humans and humans make mistakes. As with the Bereans, they heard Paul "with a ready mind", but they went to God's Word to check it out to see whether it was true or not.

In the Worldwide days, all of us who were there at that time are guilty. We often spent our study time—so called study time—reading a booklet or listening to a sermon tape (back in the cassette days) and for a lot of people, that was their study—read a booklet, listen to a sermon. But they did not directly study the Bible for themselves. They would look up a scripture mentioned in a booklet or a sermon, but just that one scripture. They wouldn't often go study the Bible for themselves. Sadly, that practice continues to this very day, where people's focus is on material produced by somebody else—a man or an organization—rather than going directly to the Bible and see what the Bible is telling us.

Notice one of our fundamental jobs as Christians in 1 Thessalonians 5:21. The first three words are critical.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 *Prove all things;* (KJV)

Don't just accept what somebody tells you—prove it. As the Bereans did and as he experienced what the Bereans did, prove it out of God's Word.

21 continued) ... hold fast that which is good. (KJV)

A good journalist will prove whether a source of information they are receiving is true and will go back and check that source out to see if they really did or said what they said they did or what they said they heard. They will check it out and get a second or third eye witness to prove it. It should be—it's not the way anymore—the way journalism should work. Today, in God's church it's always been that way. Prove out of the Bible, not just accept what somebody says. Look at Psalms 146:3. This is an interesting translation out of the New Living Translation. Every once in a while, the NLT comes up with something that causes you to chuckle.

Psalm 146:3 *Don't put your confidence in powerful people; there is no help for you there.* (NLT)

That is so true. Don't put your confidence in powerful people, be they king or somebody who claims to be an apostle or somebody of high rank somewhere, because it has to come from God Almighty, not from a human being. The key is, we need to follow a man to the extent that He follows the Father and the Son—to that extent. That's exactly what

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:1. We don't need to turn there. He says, "*be you followers of me as I am of Christ*". The New Living Translation has an interesting take on that. The NLT says, "*You should follow my example just as I follow Christ's example*". So that's the litmus test, the yard stick; we are to follow a man only to the extent that he follows the Word of the Father, the Word of the Son, the example of the Son and he follows it in, not only what he says, but also in how he lives his life—his deeds. If you have somebody say one thing and claiming it comes from God and then lives a reprobate life, I would be a little suspicious about what comes out of that individual's mouth. Closing out the third point is, that our ultimate trust should be in the Father and His Son and not in people and what people say about the Bible.

The fourth point; now we come to more of our modern day.

4. In our study we need to avoid the "itching ears" syndrome.

It is human nature to want something new, we are guilty of that. Whether it's a new car or we would like a new house or new furniture, new clothes or a new job, because we get bored or tired with what we have. Provoked by Satan, human nature is such that we always want more, we always want something better. We're not happy with what we have been given. The same can be true with knowledge, whether it's religious or not, but particularly with what we're talking about today—religious knowledge. Let's go to Acts 17:21; we are breaking into Paul's journeys and he is in Athens. That is in verse 16, but we want to focus on verse 21. Luke is making a comment about the Greek culture which is true very much so, today. This is a parenthetical verse.

Acts 17:21 (*For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.*) (KJV)

That's what got them excited. Luke is making the comment about Paul's visit. Notice what Paul has to say in 2 Timothy 4. You will notice by the time we're done; we will have spent time on quite a few verses in 1 and 2 Timothy. This is because Paul is trying to give advice to this young minister, to give him instruction on what to avoid and how to conduct his life. Paul is telling Timothy what's going to happen down the road in his day, but it's even more true in our day.

2 Timothy 4:3 *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine;* (KJV)

The Greek word for *sound* means "to be uncorrupted". But they will do something else.

3 continued) ... but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; (KJV)

It's interesting, the Greek word for *itching* is Strong's #2833 and it's the Greek word *knetho* and it literally means "to scratch". It goes on—by implication "to tickle". They want something to tickle us, to get our attention, to get us to pay attention. It's just

human nature to like our ears being tickled by something new. One of my favorite guitar players is Vince Gill. He is a country and western guitarist; song writer and singer and he wrote a song called The Next Big Thing and it was all about that very subject. People are looking for the next big thing, the next big trend—whether it's clothing, music, cars, behavior, the latest fashionable word to use. We're looking for the next big thing because we are dissatisfied with what we have.

4) And they shall turn away their ears from the truth [sad to say], and shall be turned unto fables. (KJV)

The Greek word for *fables* is Strong's #3454 and it's the Greek word *muthos* from which we get our English word *myth*. Paul is saying they are turning away from the truth and paying attention to myths. Strong's meaning is "a tale that is a fiction". So rather than hold to the truth, people's itching ears take them into fables and myths and fictions. Itching ears, if we are not careful can turn us away from God's truth. Notice why Solomon said this—Gordon mentioned it in his sermonette—let's go to Ecclesiastes 12, this is the last chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes and Solomon is summing up what he has learned. He had experienced the good and the bad and the ugly in his life. He got off track for a good bit of time. I'm going to read this out of the New Living Translation. There are some very prescient words in what Solomon has to say.

Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise are like cattle prods—painful but helpful. Their collected sayings are like a nail-studded stick with which a shepherd drives the sheep.

12) But, my child, let me give you some further advice: Be careful, for writing books is endless, and much study wears you out. (NLT)

Apply that to studying God's Word and all that is available on the internet and all of people's various opinions about the truth in God's Word. There is no end to it and it can cause you to be exhausted and has frankly caused people to be confused.

13) That's the whole story. Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty. (NLT)

One of the evils of human nature is people are not content with what they have. We focus instead on what we want but do not have. That's a human nature trait that we need to be careful about. Notice 1 Timothy 6:6. Paul is giving advice again to Timothy and this is again out of the NLT. This first sentence is so true and so applicable to us in the church today.

1 Timothy 6:6 *Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. (NLT)*

What a concept. True religion with contentment is great wealth.

7) After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it.

- 8) *So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content.*
- 9) *But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction.*
- 10) *For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. (NLT)*

Putting something in front of God Almighty, breaking the very first commandment.

- 11) *But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. (NLT)*

The context of course is covetousness—money and materialism—but a principle shines through and that is to be content with what you have; be thankful for what you have. We see throughout our Father’s Word that human nature is just not that way. Human nature always wants more, focuses on what we don’t have and is dissatisfied with life until we get the next big thing. With that in mind, we are told in Hebrews 13:5—we won’t turn there—the scripture is very familiar, it says:

Let your conduct be without covetousness and be content with such things you have. For God said I will never leave you nor forsake you.

What a concept. Let’s be content with what we have. The fact is that down through the ages and certainly in these last days, some have not been content with the doctrines revealed to us, but by studying those doctrines over and over, in some people’s mind “they can become old and tired and boring and they are looking for something new. I had someone tell me that same thing. He said, “You keep talking about the same ole boring, tired scriptures”. But they come from God and they are true and maybe we should pay attention to them. Some people seek change for change’s sake; something new, something exciting, something to ‘tickle’ the ears.

Then of course pride and vanity come into that, because if you discover something new you can say,

“Look what I’ve discovered, look at me because I am bringing you new truth”.

Let’s go to Ephesians 4:14 and see what Paul tells us on the subject. We’re trying to avoid the “itching ears” syndrome. He’s telling the church at Ephesus and by extension us to today that we should not behave like little children.

Ephesians 4:14 *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; (KJV)*

Satan is behind that. He is the master deceiver. It's interesting, the Greek word for *wind* is Strong's #417 and is the Greek word *anemos* and it's a plural word; it should be translated *winds*. The definition of *winds* is "by implication the four quarters of the earth." Meaning that these people are tossed doctrinally from every direction; from the four corners of the earth, they are being blown to and fro doctrinally. Let's go back to 1 Timothy 1:4. Paul is advising Timothy about some things to take heed about, to be careful about. Remember, behind all of this is *fear and trembling* in working out our own salvation.

1 Timothy 1:4 *Neither give heed to fables [that's the same Greek word Paul used in 2 Timothy 4:4, it means of "fiction"] and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. (KJV)*

The NLT translates this verse as:

1 Timothy 1:4 *Don't let people waste time in endless speculation over myths and spiritual pedigrees. For these things only cause arguments. They don't help people live a life of faith in God. (NLT)*

Interesting translation. When we study doctrine or we're getting different opinions or reading different things, we have to ask ourselves, does this thing I'm studying or this person's opinion, help me to live a Godly life? Does it help me live a Godly life or is it knowledge for knowledge's sake and that's it? If it doesn't help us live a Godly life then maybe we should put that on a shelf somewhere and not focus on it. What we want to focus on are the things that help us behave, live, think and act like the Father and His Son. Yes, we are called to change and grow. The Father does reveal to us—He does the revealing—over time, for our understanding of scripture. But we shouldn't change our doctrinal beliefs out of boredom, pride, or "itching ears"; that is something to be very, very careful about. We all need to avoid "itching ears" or we become doctrinally unstable. Go this direction for a while and believe this. Then, no I don't believe that anymore so then go over there and say "no", we've learned more. Then go over here—and its total confusion. We become an easier prey for Satan's deception if we have a continual "itching ears" syndrome.

Now to the 5th point and something we just need to understand because we are all human.

5. We will not agree on every detail of every doctrine.

We are imperfect human beings. The President of the United States, Lyndon Johnson, was President from 1963-1969, a native Texan like me and he said this—something important;

"If two men agree on everything you may be sure that one of them is doing the thinking."

One thinks and the other just says, “Yeah alright.” We know the Acts 15 conference came as a result of the conversion of the Gentiles. There was a group of former Pharisees saying that Gentile converts had to keep the law of Moses and had to be circumcised before becoming Christians. We see that in verse 1. Then in verse 5, let’s pick up the story out of the NLT.

Acts 15:5 *But then some of the believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and insisted, “The Gentile converts must be circumcised and required to follow the law of Moses.”*

6) *So the apostles and elders met together to resolve this issue. (NLT)*

Verse 7, the King James and the New King James translate this the same.

7) *And when there had been much disputing ... (KJV)*

I looked it up in the New Oxford Dictionary, the English word for *disputing* in today’s language, means “argue or discuss heatedly”. But the Greek word *disputing* doesn’t mean that. It’s Strong’s #4803 and the Greek word means “mutual questioning”; that is discussion and reasoning. It’s from Strong’s #4802, one digit away and this means “to investigate jointly”. So, it seems to me, if this Greek wording is correct—and I don’t have any reason to think it’s not—they were intently attempting to find the truth. Not everybody agreed but that was their motive—to find the truth. Verse 7 again out of the NLT.

7) *At the meeting, after a long discussion, Peter stood and addressed them as follows: “Brothers, you all know that God chose me from among you some time ago to preach to the Gentiles so that they could hear the Good News and believe.*

8) *God knows people’s hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he [It should be “it” and it can be translated “it”; we see a trinitarian influence here] did to us.*

9) *He made no distinction between us and them, for he cleansed their hearts through faith.*

10) *So why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear?*

11) *We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus.” (NLT)*

Notice verse 12, this is out of the New King James.

12) *Then all the multitude kept silent and listened ... (NKJV)*

That doesn’t happen today; people scream so loudly at each other, they don’t listen to what the other person is saying.

12 continued) ... to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.

13) And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me: (NKJV)

Going to verse 19.

19) Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God ... (NKJV)

Then he goes on to describe what they should advise them about and then in verse 22.

22) Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren. (NKJV)

My point is this, all of them according to what we read, listened and paid attention to the discussion and reasoning with a neutral mind and they could not deny the miracles that had occurred. Our Father was trying to emphasize, Christ was trying to emphasize—you need to pay attention to this and the miracles had proved that. We're not told of any who disagreed, but I'm sure there were several, many that did disagree. We see the vast majority agreed and they went forward.

I remember back in 1972, with the first split in the Worldwide Church of God. I had been a deacon for about three years and it was very unsettling to me. It was a concept unheard of and unthinkable at that time. Several churches and pastors in the southeast left Worldwide. So, I called my mentor, he was my former minister. I sought counsel from him because there were all kinds of rumors. I was in Boston at the time and there were all kinds of rumors going on up and down the coast. I asked him if he had any advice. He told me something that I have never forgotten. He said—I'm quoting now because I remember like it was yesterday. "Take your time, go slowly and carefully consider". Then he said, "Don't do anything fast. Don't knee jerk react to what the emotion of the moment or what somebody tells you."

In other words what he was saying was, give time to the Holy Spirit to lead you. Give it time, let it settle. So, the point is, any disagreement over doctrine has to be put into perspective. For example, if there is a disagreement about a certain doctrine, we have to ask ourselves, "Is this a doctrine I'm ready to die for? Is this a salvation doctrine? Does my salvation depend on it? Is this a disagreement about whether or not to keep the Passover? (I would say that is a question of salvation.) Or is it a dust up over who the *seven thunders* are of Revelation 10?" Well, that's knowledge for knowledge's sake, but if you understand that, how does it change your life? It really doesn't. But keeping the Passover or the Sabbath or the Holy Days, that does change our lives.

My first pastor told me, in the late 1960's, I remember because it struck me and you'll understand why. He said, "I agree with everything coming from headquarters. The minute I don't agree, I'm gone". He said, "I am 100% in agreement and the minute I'm not in 100%, I'm gone." And sure enough, a few years later there was something he disagreed with and he was gone. I'm sad to say he died a bitter, lonely, divorced man out of the church because there was just one detail he wasn't going to agree with, he wasn't in 100% agreement and said, "I'm out of here". The point is, as we wrap up the fifth point, we are all imperfect human beings and in this physical life we will never agree on every detail; we are just imperfect. This is the best example I know of as how to handle that—a doctrinal disagreement that is something important. For those who that are not familiar, Dr. Herman Hoeh was an Evangelist with Worldwide and a member of the first class of Ambassador College in 1948 and during the late '60's he came to the conclusion that Pentecost should be on a Sunday. In those days the church kept Pentecost on a Monday. So, he had a dilemma, he is an Evangelist and at Headquarters. His solution was that he kept Pentecost on both days. He came to church on the Monday but he kept it to himself on a Sunday. He did so—I could be off a year or two—for six or seven years to avoid division until Mr. Armstrong changed his mind. When Mr. Armstrong did everything was fine. The key is, we need to be patient, we need to take it to our Father, we need to see what develops down the road because we are not going to agree on every detail.

Now we come to the more pertinent point to the title, point 6.

6. If we insist on our own way, if we trust in ourselves, we will ultimately become a "church of one".

Humility is absolutely necessary in studying God's Word. We won't turn there but remember the account of the burning bush in Exodus 3. Yehovah was speaking to Moses out of the burning bush and telling him, "I want you to lead Israel out of Egypt." and what did Moses say? "Who am I that I should do this thing?" David said exactly the same thing in 2 Samuel 7 when he was ordained king. He said, "Who am I and what is my house that I should be king over God's people?" We also have to remember the example of the Bereans. With humility and with a neutral mind they studied and asked, "What is God telling us? Where does the truth lie?" Let's go to Hebrews 10:24, out of the New International Version. We go here when we talk about the need to assemble together. Notice a little more of the context and what it says. Notice the purpose.

Hebrews 10:24 *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds ... (NIV)*

How can we do that?

25) not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another — [How do we do that? By meeting together] and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

26) If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left (NIV)

It's interesting that verse 26 follows after encouraging people to meet together. The point is, if we insist that it is my way or the highway, what will happen is we will move from one group to another group to another group, finding fault with something or somebody or some doctrine. What we are really saying is, I'm superior to all of them because they don't meet my standards. A man proudly told me a number of years ago, he said with pride, "I've been in six organizations and none of them have lived up to my expectations". What he was really saying was, "I'm superior to all of them and they can't hold a candle to me and what I believe and my conduct." When we get close to that idea, Satan is right there to push our pride button and he will just start hammering on that pride button to get us to trust ourselves and not God's Word. If we listen to the Holy Spirit, through which God guides us, we will come into the unity of doctrine at least on doctrines of salvation. We will never agree on the branches and twigs and weeds but the foundational, salvation doctrines we can come to an agreement on, because if we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us and to be patient with ourselves and our brothers and sisters, that will happen. We won't turn there, we've quoted it so many times, Philippians 2:3, Paul writes,

"Don't do anything out of selfishness or conceit or ambition but in lowliness of mind esteem others better than yourselves".

That is humility at its core. If we trust ourselves, if we insist on our own way in every detail, we will ultimately become a "church of one" and we will be alone and we will be more vulnerable to Satan and his attempts to steal us, kill us and destroy us.

Let's go to the seventh and last point. This again ties in with the sermonette. This all boils down to this.

7. Where do we put our trust?

Is it in me, meaning myself? Is it in another human being? Maybe a leader in another organization? Or it is in the Father and the Son. We have to remember this fundamental scripture and if we ignore it, we ignore it to our ultimate peril. Let's go to Revelation 12:9. We dare not ignore this scripture. It is very familiar, but let's look at it from the standpoint of studying our Bible and who do we look at to reveal scripture and who do we not look to, to reveal scripture.

Revelation 12:9 *The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. (KJV)*

Since we live in that world, we are subject to his deception. Adam and Eve were subject to his deception. We have already read scriptures that we not to trust ourselves. We are not to trust in a man but instead we are to trust in the Father and His Son. The best example I can think of for that is back in the Old Testament and the example of the trust

by Moses. Let's go to Exodus 14, you probably know where we're going, start in verse 10. We're breaking into the story—Israel has marched itself out of Egypt, God at the lead, Christ at the back and they're at the edge of the Red Sea. They have the Red Sea on their right hand, they are coming to a V, with the mountains on the left hand and behind them is Pharaoh and his army.

Exodus 14:10 *And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. (KJV)*

Notice verse 11; they didn't say this to God Almighty, but they said it to Moses. But they are really blaming Yehovah.

11) And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?

12) Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. (KJV)

They were looking back and maybe remembering the few good times they had had, but were ignoring the fact that they were horribly oppressed and in slavery. Notice what Moses did. He didn't wring his hands and run around in circles throwing dust in the air.

13) And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. (KJV)

Verse 14 out of the New Living Translation.

14) Yehovah will fight for you, you need only be still. (NLT)

There comes a time when we have to simply be still and trust. We can't do anything, there's nothing more that we can do, we've done everything we can do and in a dire situation, we just have to calmly be still and trust God Almighty to rescue us. I can't tell you the number of times that has happened in my life, where God pulled me out of the fire. You pray and pray about it and at the last minute something happens and you are rescued. Pacific has been rescued so many times. Personally, I have been rescued so many times. God takes us to the point and says, "Okay, are you just going to dissolve into a little puddle of goo here, over this problem, or are you going to be quiet and just trust Me? Just trust Me and I'll take care of you."

The bottom line in closing out our last point is that our Father and His Son are the only ones we can totally, completely trust. We can't trust human beings. Yet, we're told to assemble together. The next scripture talks about a very bad sin. We're told to assemble together, so what are we supposed to do? I get asked this quite frequently by

somebody out in the hinterlands—what do I do? I don't know what to do. You associate with likeminded brethren and thankfully today you can associate over the internet or over email or video some way or another, telephone—a lot of ways it can be done as opposed to years ago. We need to associate with likeminded brethren. Assemble with likeminded brethren if we can.

Likeminded brethren are those who put the Father first in their lives and study with a neutral mind and try to establish what God is really telling us. Those who follow Almighty God and not a man. Those who esteem others better than themselves. If we can find such people, hopefully there will be enough to gather together. If we can find such people, those are the ones we should associate with. Those are the ones that we should gather together with. But we don't trust in human beings; we trust in the Father and we trust in His Son because they are eternal—both of them. Our Father has a title, *God Almighty*, He has a title *Most High God* and if He can't rescue us and if we can't trust in Him, then we might as well—as Paul said—just *eat, drink and be merry because we're going to die tomorrow* and it will all be over with. The fact is, our Father and His Son are the only Ones that we can totally trust.

Let's conclude now. We are reminded at Passover and again on Pentecost that the Father and His Son live in us. What a concept! They actually make their abode in us as Christ promised in John 14. Our job is to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us. Remember what Paul said in Romans—*for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*. We want to be the sons of God so we better let the Holy Spirit lead us. We have to trust that the Holy Spirit will lead us to the truth in our Father's Word, if we look to our Father and His Son.

Since Pacific began, as I mentioned in the introduction, we have encouraged brethren to study the Bible to prove what it actually says and *to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling*. Not to trust another human being that they are going to get you into the Kingdom of God because that is not going to happen. We have to stand alone before our Father and we have to explain what we have done and what we have not done. What we believe and what we haven't believed. Our Father tells us—that's why He warned us—you better work out your own salvation, but you better be careful and do it with *fear and trembling* because your adversary the devil wants to destroy you, just as he did with Adam and Eve by deceiving them to do what? They trusted in themselves; this seems good, this looks good, so why not? They went ahead and did it. They trusted themselves rather than God Almighty. We are to study as I said with *fear and trembling* because we are to trust no human—especially ourselves because we are fallible, we make mistakes, we get things wrong; all of us have done that. That's why personal humility is so important, to realize that we can be wrong. If we trust in ourselves, we will ultimately be a "church of one".

We need to seek the truth with a neutral mind, putting our Father and His Son's truth first in our lives. Let's turn, for a final scripture, to Ephesians 4. We have to trust in our Father and His Son to reveal the truth to us. They will lead us to the truth and then

They'll lead us to what we find in this last scripture that we will close with. Ephesians 4:11, out of the New Living Translation.

Ephesians 4:11 *He is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers.*

12) Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ' (NLT)

To do what? Verse 13.

13) until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ. (NLT)

In how we think and how we act and what we say.

14) Then we will no longer be like children. [Notice what the NLT says] forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different or because someone has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth. (NLT)

Really interesting.

15) Instead, we will hold the truth in love, becoming more and more in every way like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.

16) Under his direction the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. (NLT)

So, let's study the Bible as our Father intended and let's avoid becoming a "church of one".