



On The Frontier



“For The Glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel”

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Avoid Substitutes

Certainly you’ve heard it said that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” But have you ever questioned the veracity of that statement, or wondered at its origin? The answer of course, is that most of us have not. It seems concepts not dismissed as “old wive’s tales” become a staple for “cultural wisdom.” This may be why so many think that “seeing is believing” and “God works in mysterious ways.” The same teach their children to “make-believe” rather than pretend and expect that “no news - is good news.” If it seems that I’m trifling over words let me say that God is very precise with the use of words in His Word. He NEVER uses words indifferently. His Word has the same degree of integrity that He has, always above reproach and impeccable.

Psalms 12:6

The words of the LORD *are* pure words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

The Bible in Basic English gives the above verse as follows:

Psalms 12:6

The words of the Lord are true words: like silver tested by fire and burned clean seven times.

God’s Word speaks more authoritatively on this subject than any other source. He gives special emphasis to the purity and integrity of His Word and the individual words contained therein.

Proverbs 30:5

Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

Psalms 119:140

Thy word *is* very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

Romans 7:12

Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Psalms 19:7-11

The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple.

The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes.

The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.

More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Moreover by them is thy servant warned: *and* in keeping of them *there is* great reward.

Clearly, the Word’s testimony of Itself is all we need. Nevertheless, from childhood we have been conditioned to think a certain way. And even though the bulk of this is initially imparted to us by our parents they too are the

product of conditioning. This is true for all those who have taught us or been mentor to us. Yes, each and every one a product of culture and worldly conditioning. Some to a greater degree than others of course, but conditioned nonetheless. It is therefore incumbent upon us to become cognizant of this and work diligently so as to change and become Word centered. When the Word of God is central to our thinking are lives are transformed. Our goals change as do our aspirations. Our worldly conditioning is annulled.

Psalms 37:4

Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

What we think, say and do become of paramount importance to us. We desire only that which is pleasing in His sight.

Psalms 19:14

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

This is the path to true peace and the ONLY right way to live!

Proverbs 16:7

When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

We enjoy the fruits of righteousness when the Word of God becomes to us more than just words on a page.

Philippians 1:9-11

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment;

That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Living the Word is living love and provides for us the greatest liberty and joy known to man. Not just for us but also for the Father.

I John 3:18-22

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God.

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

III John 4

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

When the Word of God lives in us we begin to understand life as never before.

Psalm 119:99,100

I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies *are* my meditation.

I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

Furthermore, the more we love the Word the more we disdain the world.

Psalm 119:104

Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

With understanding we begin to notice the falsehoods that surround us. We become more astute at detecting those points at which culture¹, language and “science” contradict the Word of God. We begin to question the concepts and ideals we’ve been given to hold and test them against the Scripture.

Hidden within some of the things we read and hear we discover messages and concepts which previously had gone unnoticed. Why? Because we have begun to develop a biblically based spiritual perception and awareness.

Is a picture worth a thousand words? If so, why did God choose words to convey His heart and not pictures?

When deciding on a vacation destination most of us like to choose locations with scenery as breathtakingly different from our everyday surroundings as possible. The camera is among the first of the items we pack and we are careful to bring plenty of film. If we own a

¹Please note that we are placing everything man does in the category of culture, the exceptions being science and language.

digital camera we bring the biggest memory card we can find. We might even grab a disposable camera or two, just in case our equipment should fail us. Committing our memories to images, be they still or moving, has become a very important facet of recording family history. I, like most everyone else I know, have endeavored to maintain some semblance of a photographic journal of our family’s activities. Especially vacation outings but also birthdays, weddings and other memorable events. I don’t know if I could say, “a picture is worth a thousand words” but I certainly do value them. Sadly, they do not often do justice to the “story” they are intended to tell. Often I’ve tried to capture the scenic beauty I’ve been privileged to witness only to be disappointed with my results. It seems my photographic abilities (and maybe my equipment) fall short of really conveying the magnitude of some of the imagery I’ve photographed. The mountains never look as big, the valleys never seem so vast, the rivers lack the roar, foam and smell of the real thing. Add to this my fading memory and ever changing perception and my pictures require yet more in the way of words to describe that which I photographed. Words do go so well together with pictures. Don’t they.

Having said that, let me add another personal observation. The statement, “a picture is worth a thousand words” has actually demeaned both the value of the picture and the necessity of words. When used together they are a most powerful method of communication.

A picture requires words to help it live but words do not require pictures to help them live. Words are the single most valid form of communication known to man. It is also evident that the written word is the most valuable usage of words. When memory fails we

can always go back and re-read what we may have forgotten. The most formidable memory being that of pen and paper. Human memory fades SO much faster than ink!

Before I go any further, I want to make sure that you understand clearly that I don't have a problem with pictures. I like them and think that they are wonderful. I do not however, think that "a picture is worth a thousand words." Words are much more precise for communication than pictures. When anyone looks at a picture they contemplate what must have happened. Ten people can look at one picture and envision ten different happenings. Words may be taken literally, pictures may not. After all, words are the essence of "literature." And we all know that a person who reads and speaks well is "literate." What may we say of pictures? A picture without words lacks the true potential for literal accuracy. That is, it will forever be subject to the perception of the viewer. Even the images we hold in our minds must be identified with words. How else could you tell me about the vibrant red hue of the apple you are thinking about. Pictures are good but they depend upon words. Words however, do not depend upon pictures.

Isn't it amazing how God was able to describe the infinite with finite words! This was His choice and a wise one it is. He did not choose pictures to communicate to us, though we are surrounded by more beauty than our use of words can declare. While our words may fail us, His never do.

Psalms 138:2

I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy

truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.

Of all God's creation the greatest is His Word. More magnificent than the highest peak or the greatest ocean is His Word. We could examine the creation and all its wonders for a thousand years and never get the understanding of God that His Word gives. By looking at the creation you can see that there is a God but you learn little about Him. You can see that He is big and powerful but you cannot see His heart. Only through His Word may we see His heart!

John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

The Word made flesh is Jesus Christ. He is the ultimate communication of God. Jesus made known God by speaking God's Word. It was not simply by looking at Jesus or seeing what he did that made God known to those around him. NO! It was by what he said. Today, there are so many people who are ignorant of what Jesus Christ said. Frankly speaking, what he said is even more significant than what he did. And what he did is the most unbelievable thing ever done for man. He gave his life in payment for sin and its consequence. To truly understand the significance of this requires and understanding of what he said. The Gospel of God is made up of the words of God. Without words we cannot understand what God did for us by giving us His Son.

John 17:1-14

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*.

While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

What Jesus gave was what God wanted him to give. He gave God's Word. He spoke that which is written.

John 6:63-69

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.

But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

Words of eternal life! Jesus gave them words, not pictures. How else could we understand any of God's intent and desire?

Ephesians 3:1-4

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

It is by reading His Word that God gives us understanding. That is, when we want to understand.

Proverbs 2:1-5

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;

So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, *and* apply thine heart to understanding;

Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, *and* liftest up thy voice for understanding;

If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as *for* hid treasures;

Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

The Word of God gives us light in the dark!

Psalms 119:130

The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Psalms 119:105

Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

II Peter 1:19-21

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Holy men of God spake the Word of God which Word we are to take literally. While pictures may be subject to private interpretation, God's Word is not.

The phrase we've been considering was originally "a picture is worth ten thousand words" not "a thousand words." It first appeared in an advertising trade journal called *Printer's Ink* on December 8, 1921. This original quotation is credited to Frederick R. Barnard as the supposed retelling of a Chinese proverb. The advertisement spoke of the benefit of advertising on street cars. On March 10, 1927 there appeared an advertisement lauding the benefits of a specific baking soda. Mr. Barnard endeavored to fabricate a phony Chinese proverb for the sake of an advertising campaign. Initially, he used the phrase "One look is worth a thousand words" later changing it to "one picture

is worth ten thousand words." He then called it a Chinese proverb so that people would take it seriously. Immediately Confucius was credited for the saying. The advertising executives assumed that the consumer would be more compelled to purchase the product with the weight of a Chinese proverb behind it. Somehow this phony Chinese proverb has attained the literal meaning that a picture is the equivalent to a thousand words. This set up a conflict between words and pictures in the minds of users of the two. With digital supremacy, visual messages have reasserted their position as an important communication medium, but at the cost of not recognizing the combination of words and pictures as vital in communication. Correctly understood words and pictures live in harmony as both may be used equally to understand the meaning of any work that uses them both. It is important to remember that God's Word does not use them both. Pictures used in conjunction with His Word are most assuredly biased by the understanding and interpretation of the user. And lest we forget, most often the book is better than the movie! Why? Because the movie is forced to leave out most of the detail found in the book!

Interestingly, the first street car advertisement had the following copy:

**ROYAL BAKING POWDER
ABSOLUTELY PURE
AVOID SUBSTITUTES**

"MAKE A CAKE FOR BOBBY"

Combined with the happy smiling face of a young lad, moms everywhere were given a sure way to treat their youngsters and thrill at their next baking experience. Now they had a way to bring a happy expression to the faces of their very own children. Yes

mom, bake a cake for Bobby and please be sure to avoid substitutes!

In some cases the movie may be better than the book. But this can never be true for the Book of Life! A picture may never be worth ten or even one thousand words, but the Word of God is for ever the Literature of Eternity.

Imagery may enhance the Word at times but it can NEVER, NEVER be considered a substitute. All the pictures in the world could never speak as authoritatively as God's Word. The Word lives and abides for ever, not imagery digital or otherwise.

Do Bobby a favor and spare the cake. Give him bread, the bread of life. In baking for Bobby be sure to use ample amounts of God's Word.

The Book is better than the movie because it gives the whole story, His story!

Proverbs 25:11

A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold in pictures of silver.

AVOID SUBSTITUTES!
