

# Spiritual Considerations...

*Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.*



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Dave Phillips, editor

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## Heard the Latest Research Findings?

Dave Phillips, Germantown

I received a call today from Barna Research Group, a religiously oriented fact-gathering group out of California. Initially, I was interested because I rarely hear of people who have actually been called – so I've always been a bit suspicious of the reliability of the findings that are reported. Personal problem, I suppose. I've also always wanted to know more about their procedure of gathering information. What questions do they ask? What options do they give? I've only received one other data gathering telephone call in my life on the presidential election in 1992. According to their reported results, the majority of the responders did not agree with my excellent answers, thus feeding my suspicious nature. I mean, could I really be *that* wrong?

The researcher from Barna asked if I was the senior pastor. Here we go. I am really not a 'pastor.' We have several 'pastors,' 'shepherds,' 'bishops,' etc., but I knew she didn't want to hear my distinctions. Then I thought about 'senior,' and thought she might mean oldest. I quickly thought about older ministers with whom I work (not naming names), but then thought better. So I said, "I am the preaching minister here." Safe enough.

She was very kind and had a helpful voice. She explained that she had several questions. The first was, "With which denomination are you affiliated?" I quickly responded that we were not a denomination, that we were an autonomous church serving in the way spoken of in the Bible. Her voice quickly changed. Her sentences were short and unequivocal.

"Oh, well then. That's another category. Bye." Click. The line was dead.

Somewhat startled, I hung up and started thinking about the implications of this conversation. Now I'm even more suspicious of people who have conducted "research." Although I appreciate perspectives of many people on many subjects, I am always leery of the person with all the answers. Generally, we make assumptions based on our observations. But, it is absolutely impossible to be 'all inclusive' and make definite determinations with broad application. Now, I am totally reliant on the "trustworthiness" of the researcher regarding the legitimacy of their findings.

I'm now even more convinced not to listen to anyone purporting to have the "scoop" on the general direction of anyone, particularly on religious topics. The next time I hear, "The whole brotherhood feels this way," or "Everyone knows..." or "This is what any particular group feels..." I will be suspicious. There are some self-appointed experts on world affairs and on movements within the church. Masked in the guise of experts, they really are only giving their own perspective.

I'm glad God is the ultimate judge. Unwittingly, I've learned a great response to those that try to manipulate my thinking by claiming omniscience. I'll probably not have the courage to say it audibly. But I can't help thinking it.

The next time I hear someone say, "This is what the entire brotherhood is thinking," I will respond with, "Oh well, then. That's another category. Bye."

## Wasted Education

A little girl had just finished her first week of school.  
"I'm just wasting my time," she said to her mother.  
"I can't read, I can't write, and they won't let me talk!"

**My Grateful Soul**  
**Rick Casebier, Germantown**

Within my being my spirit weeps  
For the years in sin lost  
The Devil, the terrible score he keeps  
My Soul could be the cost

Look up into the heavens distance  
Beyond the deep blue  
But there is only darkness with no existence  
Of anything living that man knew

Looking for some sign of God  
Where could he be?  
All the preachers point up, how odd  
There is nothing there for me to see

Then one day in prayer  
Seeking answers to my distress  
God opened my blind eyes and lay the truth bare  
It is the Bible where the truth lies waiting to bless

God is not for mere man to behold  
He gave his word thru his Son  
The truth in the great book we are told  
Believe, obey & live in obedience, then your work is done

Look around the living green earth  
See God's work, all to man he gave  
How much more is your soul worth?  
To a God who gave his son, your soul to save

Much man cannot understand  
Not a single inch to our height can we add  
Trust in God and his great plan  
Your Soul will rejoice and be glad

Look to the heart of your soul within  
This is where God you will see  
Let God be your Friend  
Someday, Your Grateful Soul with God will be

**Words of Reassurance**  
**(Psalm 16:7-11, NASV)**

“I will bless the Lord who has counseled me; indeed, my mind instructs me in the night. I have set the Lord continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol; neither will you allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in your right hand there are pleasures forever.”