

FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS

by Tom Wacaster

About a month ago I decided that it was time to replace the old DVD player with an updated player and recorder combo. When I unpacked the box there were four manuals (one in English, one in Spanish, one in French, and one in German), a package of wires included for routing the TV signal through the DVD player, a wire for use with digital cameras, and some extra paraphernalia for first one thing and then another. Everything was included in the box that would give me an “enjoyable experience” with my new DVD player/recorder (except batteries, of course). Most manufactures of electronic equipment have figured out that many of their customers are anxious to “get started” and so they include, along with the owner’s manual, a “quick start guide” that enables the customer to get his equipment up and running, even if he does not know what he is doing once he *does* get it going. Once the customer has his equipment up and running he is encouraged to take the time to read the owner’s manual. But if I know the human race, by this time most of the new proud owners of the latest in electronic gadgetry are saying to themselves, “Who needs the owner’s manual? What do they think I am, a dunce? I can do this on my own.” This same mind set kicks in when it comes to consulting a map to figure out where you are, putting together a complicated piece of lawn equipment, or following instructions for any number of complicated, or not so complicated, items.

Were this mind set limited to the temporal and physical realm in which we live, we might only have to suffer an occasional embarrassment, or at worst, like Tim “the-tool-man” Taylor, make a visit to the hospital now and then. But tragically this same kind of mind set seems to have infected the masses when it comes to listening to, or consulting with, the God of heaven in matters of religion. I have, on a number of occasions, referred to the Bible as our soul’s “owner’s manual.” Within the pages of this book are instructions that will provide us with a peaceful and happy life here on earth (Phil 4:7), better health and overall happiness (1 Pet. 3:10), our daily provisions of food, clothing and shelter (Matt. 6:19-33), and the hope of life everlasting when this life is over (Rom. 8:25, 1 Cor.13:13, Gal. 5:5). When we examine the religious landscape about us it is rather obvious that the “many” (Matt. 7:13) have gone about seeking to establish a system of religion based upon their own wants and desires rather than taking the time to read and study the owner’s manual. “I don’t need that manual,” or “I’m smart enough to figure this out on my own” seem to permeate the thinking of mankind spiritually speaking. It seems to me that there are at least four classifications of those who have failed, or are failing, to read the manual. First, there are those who have never even heard of the manual. Living in the dark recesses of the earth, they are completely unaware of the Bible, the message contained therein, or it’s Great Giver. These need not live in Africa, or the Congo, for there are some even within the borders of our own United States who have never heard of God, Jesus Christ, the Bible, or the plan for man’s salvation. Millions upon millions living in India bow at the feet of their Hindu gods while millions here in America bow at the shrine of material gain without so much as an inkling of an idea of who God is or the wonderful blessings that await them through His Son Jesus Christ.

Second, there are those who know *about* the manual, but have not taken the time to study it carefully. These have some vague idea as to the system of Christianity, but at some point in time they decided that they do not need God, nor do they need to take the time to

read the Bible, or comply with the commandments contained therein. That “manual” may have been good enough for mom and dad, but after all, “I have more important things to do than to waste time reading some manual; I can figure this out for myself.”

Third, there are those who want a “quick start” in their “Christianity,” and, rather than read the manual itself, have relied upon others to read it for them. Heed is given to their “pastor,” or “preacher” upon whom they rely for instructions in religion and the exercise thereof. The false teachers, with their “smooth and fair speech...beguile the hearts of the innocent” (Rom. 16:18), and these careless souls are carried away with every wind of doctrine imaginable (Eph. 4:14); all for the lack of taking the time to read the instructions.

Finally, there are those who have quickly read the manual or a small portion thereof, and who care not what the Book says but are intent on doing it their way. “I like it,” or “I want it” are the twin manifestations of a selfish heart that despise the narrow-minded pattern of God’s word. Rather than confine themselves to the instructions from above, they are determined to walk in the path of their own foolishness. They ignore the warning of old, “O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). To them, *how* to worship God is not so important as their *desire* to worship him. Sincerity trumps truth, and feelings outweigh facts. From those caught up in denominational error to those who have been deluded by the change agents within the body of Christ, the end result will be the same, for “if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into the pit” (Matt. 15:14).

When it comes to life, and the eternal destiny of the soul, it is imperative that you take the time to read the instructions and follow them cautiously and carefully. You may be able to eventually figure out how to operate that new piece of electronic equipment. You may even be able to figure out “how to get there from here” without consulting a map. But beloved, you are NEVER (I repeat, “Never”) going to make it to heaven if you do not take the time to read and follow the instructions.

My Old Bible

Though the cover is worn,
And the pages are torn,
And though places bear traces of tears.
Yet more precious than gold,
Is this book worn and old,
That can scatter and shatter my fears.
This old book is my guide.
This is a friend by my side
It will lighten and brighten my way;
And each promise I find,
Soothes and gladdens my mind,
As I read it and heed it each day.
To this book I will cling,
Of its worth I will sing,
Though great losses and crosses be mine;
For I cannot despair,
Though surrounded by care,

While possessing this blessing divine.