

WILLFULLY IGNORANT

This year in July I will be 39 years old in Yeshua. It's been a long road, not as long as some, but longer than others. During my life, I've been to a variety of churches. I was educated and confirmed in an Episcopalian church when I was a young man. Afterward, I sowed my wild oats, only to realize the filth and fruitlessness of sin, culminating in my asking Yeshua into my life and heart, repenting of my sinfulness and moving forward into a life, living with His Spirit within me, guiding me through all of the bumps, switchbacks and other obstacles that lie in the road of Faith in Yeshua Ha Mashiach.

I believe that Yahweh leads us to the right church that we need at each and every season of our lives. When I was first saved, I attended a church that taught me the rudimentary elements of Faith. When I wanted meat instead of bread, I became Pentecostal, worshiping at an Assembly of God. When I saw the corruption at that church I left and was led to a Four-Square Church where I continued to grow. That church was one big clique so I left there and actually backslid in faith for about four years. Yahweh moved me across the country to North Carolina where I found an awesome church and thrived my short time there. Moving back to California I was led to a church that had all sorts of problems and although I wanted to flee from that place, Yahweh told me to stay and to intercede for that fellowship. It was hard to stay there, but I got to see some fruit from the prayers that I offered up to Yahweh. I left there and didn't attend church for a year or two but then was introduced by a sister in Yahweh to a church named Last Days Harvest Ministries. Pastor Tom Mooney and his wife Roberta treated me wonderfully and Tom recognized my ministry to people in the UFO cults as being a legitimate ministry. I married my first wife during this time, a wonderful woman from Mexico that loved Yeshua. She had left Catholicism many years before and was an outcast from her family. Unfortunately, Lourdes went to be with Yeshua a little more than two years into our marriage. I mourned for a year and then found my present wife Barbara, who lived up in Oregon. We married in 2012 upon which time I had to leave Tom and Roberta and move to Oregon.

Barbara was attending a church in Eugene, Oregon that seemed to be on the mark. I hit it off well with the pastor at first but then got into little conflicts with him in regard to people in the church that were leading the fellowship down the road toward the New Age. The pastor was great in many ways but was willfully ignorant when it came to people in his fellowship and what they were doing. It almost seemed like this pastor was willing to let transgressions occur, and I think that he believed that if he prayed hard enough that Yahweh would take care of the

problems. I sort of mused that it would be like a shepherd seeing wolves mingling with the flock and just praying that Yahweh would make the wolves go away. That is not a shepherd, that is an observer. So much for emulating Yeshua, right? Toward the end of our tenure there it became evident that the pastor had his own little doctrinal idiosyncrasies, and you know how the old adage goes, “if you live in a glass house you cannot throw stones.” I guess that one could also throw in, “birds of a feather flock together,” into the mix.

Barbara and I, along with a good friend left that fellowship. Barbara and I decided to try other churches in Eugene but we found it hard to find a church that taught the true Gospel of Yeshua. Yes, many taught prosperity and Word of Faith, but few talked about sin, hell, and holiness. We tried what was then the biggest Baptist Church in Eugene, but were turned off by some of the parishioners. One family was put off that we were sitting in their seats and they weren't quiet about it. I made arrangements with the head pastor to address the problem, to even come to the church and show him where we sat, but that idea just fell through the cracks. We visited a few other churches of varying flavors but found nothing that we could call home.

Before we proceed, let me express my thoughts about something. The modern Church, at least here in America doesn't teach the preamble to the Gospel of Yeshua Ha Mashiach. Yes, it is true that Yahweh so loved the world that He gave his own son to die for the world. And yes, it is true that we're saved if we confess Yeshua with our mouth and believe in our hearts that Yahweh raised Him from the dead. What they leave out is the reason why Yahweh had to give His Son and what exactly we're saved from? Please allow me to use a New Jersey analogy. Let's say that one night you got home from work and I walked up to you and told you that you had been saved today (physically through something that I had done) and that I had acted several times today to save you, you'd probably be oblivious to what I was talking about. You might even call the police to say that I was harassing you. However, if I came up to you and explained that the mob has a contract on your life, and that your car brakes lines were cut but I fixed them before you got into the car, and that a window of the store that shattered near you was broken by a bullet that was meant for you, and oh, let's say that the car that blew up a block away happened because I confused the assassin and he picked the wrong car; then I told you that I saved you several times that day, you'd understand, right? Now equate that to what many churches are doing nowadays. They are inviting people to come to Yeshua to be saved, yet they fail to tell people what they are saved from. They preach the happy ending to the story without telling people why the happy ending is so happy.

It was then that we decided to branch out. If we couldn't find a church in Eugene or Springfield then we'd just go north. We tried an Assembly of God church in Brownsville, Oregon but the pastor was not friendly at all, and in addition, the pastor was a woman. Scripture is quite clear that this is not to be. The next week we went further out into the sticks and found a church in an unincorporated part of Linn County. The people there seemed friendly and the pastor was a young man who has a fire for Yeshua. The churchmen were hunters and fishermen, liked to split firewood and other things that I found appealing. We attended there for almost two years, even joined the church. Things started to happen in that second year. One of the women in the church started to glare at us when we would see her at church. I was told by a local person in town that she had always been that way, but where was the change that happens at New Birth? Her father in-law was hung up on Preterism, a notion that the apocalypse occurred with the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. and that the Church replaces Israel. Yet another person, the church narcissist approached me one day and said that he'd like to be a missionary to Muslims. I merely said that he should be careful and read up on Islam before he made any move. He immediately labeled me as being prejudice and walked away. That whole day he called me prejudice, excusing his judgment by saying that all people have some sort of prejudice. The thing is that I was seeing the same sort of willful ignorance that I saw at the church in Eugene, the pastor even admitting that there are screwed up people (his words) in his fellowship and that he keeps praying for them. We quietly left that church. There are some very nice people at that church and we didn't want to cause a stir or offend anyone.

Here we sit in Oregon, the most unchurched state in America, looking for a church that will teach holiness, righteousness, godliness and of course that sin exists and it is the reason that we have a need for the redemption of Yeshua's blood. In an attempt to reach out to a church down the road in hopes that we might find a place to attend, we were told by the pastor that he doesn't address issues that are controversial. He'll preach the Gospel and essential theology, which is good of course, but not for or against any of the doctrines that are out there that one might consider gray areas. In an attempt to help us find a fellowship, he suggested a Mennonite Church and a Church of Christ. My wife and I walked out of this man's church dumbfounded, that he would suggest such churches. It was a clear sign to us that this man knows nothing about faith beyond the foundation of Christian theology, and his suggestion of those two churches made us wonder if he even knows that. As we walked out to our truck my wife said that she felt sad. She remarked that this man's congregation will be perpetual babes in Messiah and that they will never grow to know the fullness of Yeshua. That is true of that church, and many others.

As you can see, we have run into many instances where the leaders and people in churches are willfully ignorant. And pardon me if this offends you, but if you break down those words, you can say that it is people being dumb on purpose. Look up the words in a Greek Lexicon for yourself if you do not believe me. Why would someone be purposefully ignorant? Well, it could be that they do not like confrontations. It could be that they are afraid that if they stir the pot a bit it could cause a church split. Church splits cause loss of revenue and loss of revenue causes church closures. I've seen it many times, where churches become stagnant, thus becoming a "us four and no more" sort of fellowship. People looking for living water cannot and will not stay in a stagnant pond that is filled with pond scum and is a haven for spiritual mosquito's that suck the life's blood out of the followers of Yeshua. It is an established fact that running streams and small rivers purify themselves through a process called self-purification. Think about it, when you are standing by a small stream or river there is a constant flow of fresh water that flows by you. Fresh water enters your location and fresh water leaves your location. You have a better chance of not getting ill from drinking out of a moving stream than you do a stagnant pond. Flowing water washes away impurity too. In the same manner, a church that wants to grow will grow and if allowed, the Ruach Ha Kodesh will bring in constant freshness and renewal.

But when you think about it, the willful ignorance isn't just a church thing, it is a worldly thing. We live in a society where information can be had twenty-four / seven and just a simple Google search can yield information on both sides of an issue. A smart man will look at all sources before he makes a determination. If we look very carefully, we can see where people lie and distort the truth. For instance, the liberal news sources said that the turnout for the Trump Inauguration was light compared to Obama's 2012 inauguration. They showed pictures that supposedly showed that the Trump Event had a much smaller turnout. But the idiots at CNN also showed a video of the Trump Inauguration which showed the crowds going back as far as the eye could see. They contradicted their own lie. They didn't have to be judged by a jury of their peers because their two pieces of evidence contradicted each other and convicted them.

The sum of all of this is a pride problem, both in the world and among Christians. I am certainly not one to lecture any of you about pride. I find it creeping up on me all the time. But I can say that it can be mastered if one wants to master it and to ask Yahweh to help us to work in this area. Without Him, mastering pride is impossible. One of the ways that Yahweh helped me to master pride is in my marriages. Marriage is difficult because it is always like a Chevy marrying a Ford. Now both are cars, both are American, both have engines, transmissions and many of the same moving parts, yet each act differently, each sound different and parts are not

interchangeable, except for maybe light bulbs. The Chevy might not drive the same as the Ford and the firing order of their spark plugs are different on each engine but the principle is the same. The only one that can understand each car is an auto mechanic. A good mechanic can work on most cars and make them run properly. Likewise, men and women are different. My mother once told me, “stop trying to understand women because men and women will never ever understand each other.” However, our mechanic, Yahweh, understands both men and women because he made us.

Like I alluded, marriage can be difficult because two different models become one flesh, although they're independent, they become one in purpose and destiny. I became a widower in 2010 when my first wife passed away suddenly from meningitis. We had a very good marriage but like most marriages, we sometimes didn't see things eye to eye. I've never been one for arguing, so when we would get into our heated discussions, I proposed that we both go into separate rooms and pray about the matter. She agreed, and we would go into separate rooms for periods of up to half an hour to pray. Neither of us prayed for Yahweh to show the other that they were wrong, but that He would bring clarity to each of us and help us to understand each other. I can't number the times that both of us would come back together realizing that our pride had gotten in the way, we would apologize one to the other and our differences always turned out to bring us closer together by practicing putting Yahweh first in our relationship. My belief is that most marriages break-up because either one or both of the people are unrelenting in their determination of proving the other person wrong. With my first wife, and also with my wife today we often retreat to circumspection and every time we will both apologize for being wrong which leads to resolution of the conflict.

Bringing it back to that one church that we attended, where the pastor was allowing New Age practices to come into the church, we can see how pride is destroying this man's church and his ministry. Truth be told, we approached him in love about allowing New Age practices. We were never condemning and never gossiped behind the back of the pastor. We never mentioned our concerns to other church members, but did have other church members voice their concerns to us. Before we left that congregation for good, we noticed that the pastor himself was taking on the heresy of “The Tabernacle of David” doctrine. The sad thing is that after having addressed the pastor the pastor started to turn against us. I was called to a meeting at a local restaurant where the two elders basically told me that if I kept talking to the pastor about these things my wife and I could be asked to leave the church. I was also reminded of all of the good things that they did for my wife when she was going through a hard time. It felt like I was having a meeting with two “fixers” from the mob. In addition, there were other signs that we noticed that caused

us alarm. One was that the pastor's wife seemed to dictate the policies of the church in almost every aspect. Another was that the person that was bringing in the New Age aspects to the church was on the church board and was the treasurer, and continued to be so even after we addressed her paganism. I could go on, but what good would that do. The thing is that when these things were addressed, they were dismissed immediately. As far as I could ascertain, there never was any attempt to contemplate what we were saying or to seek Yahweh's thoughts on the matters. In shepherding terms, it was as though the pastor would rather sacrifice a few sheep than to address the lions that were destroying his church. Think about the mess that he'd have to address. He'd have to confront his wife to tell her that she needed to take a back seat and listen rather than talk. Knowing the woman, that would have been a disaster in its own right. Second, he'd have to bring those who were introducing paganism into his church to repent or leave. Third, he'd have to repent himself and turn away from the heresy that he was fostering. It's much easier to remain willfully ignorant than to swim against those currents. The question, however, begs to be asked, what if Yeshua had decided to become willfully ignorant? What if he decided, "I don't want to die for the people? I don't want to free them from sin and death because crucifixion is just too hard to bear." So much for being Christlike.

Perhaps that is why Yeshua tells us to take up our cross and follow him, why the authors of the Epistles exhort us to strive to be like Yeshua, and why if we consider our family more important than Him, we are not worthy of Him. In essence, if you can't pastor your flock, go and get another job and give the flock to someone who wants to tend the sheep. Perhaps it should be a required credit course for those who want to pastor to go to the third world to work alongside a real shepherd. Maybe when an up and coming pastor can see how wolves and mountain lions are constantly chased away, they will be able to see the dangers that they are supposed to protect the sheep from. Perhaps when that same person sees a mangled sheep in misery because it was half eaten the night before, or when they have to physically intervene to keep a sheep safe it will sink in what their job is really about. Perhaps then he will see that he himself is vulnerable to attack by wild animals and that he always has to keep vigilant to protect himself and the sheep. Maybe this is what is lacking and perhaps this is why pastors in western nations tend to be willfully ignorant when it comes to doing what is right resisting what is wrong. Maybe then the everyday parishioner will see the example of what a real Christian should be. Maybe then they will be taught that there is no compromise when it comes to caring for each other.

I have noticed a huge difference between pastors that have pastored churches in bad neighborhoods or who come from dangerous parts of the world, and those who have gone to cemeteries and acquired the book smarts. The prior has street smarts and practical experience in

this world while the others have been taught the doctrinal theories that in most cases are not effective in this world. A good friend of mine and a wonderful brother in Mashiah, Jim Wilhelmsen, started one of the first Christian motorcycle ministries in the Detroit area way back in the 60's. He and his members were threatened, their church was firebombed twice and they were constantly harassed by demonic bikers from motorcycle clubs. Jim just continued on and his persistence paid off because his long-suffering caused the other clubs to have respect for him and his parishioners. Some of the outlaw bikers actually got saved.

On the flip-side, we now have churches that will allow practicing homosexuals to come into the church and worship there because they want to appear tolerant. One church, down in Eugene, Oregon decided to mount a "Church Sucks" campaign because that phrase appeals to the unchurched and they thought that it would bring people into the church. Later that year they started to play Katy Perry songs during worship times in order to keep the people that they deceived with the prior campaign. Soon the pastor was found to be an adulterer and was asked to leave the church. He did leave, but instead of repenting, he left his wife and shackled up with his Jezebel girlfriend. Being willfully ignorant and not correcting the condition only leads to further atrophy of one's condition which finalizes with the destruction of the man or woman that compromises little at first and full bore later on.

If you want to succeed in your walk with Yeshua and you want your ministry to thrive then just quit compromising and replace a willfully ignorant spirit with one that is fully involved in serving Yeshua by following His commandments, thus accomplishing His will. We're supposed to be selfless, giving of ourselves constantly so that the world can see what real Believers in Yeshua are. Anyone can believe in Jesus. Heck, Satan believes in Jesus, but the big difference is when we believe Jesus, in what he said, who he is, and what start doing what he commanded us to do. It all starts out with practicing love, which is a culmination of the Torah and the Prophets. When we love each other, we cannot possibly willfully ignorant because love conquers selfishness and pride. I finish this text with this scripture:

And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a

sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Luke 18:7-14