



## Today's Quick Word 1 Corinthians 14:1, 8

*By Bruce Christian*

**1 CORINTHIANS 14:1, 8** Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. . . . Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?

The public defence of the non-negotiable truths of the Christian Faith is certainly a 'battle' in our present culture, with the media taking every opportunity to oppose, mock and undermine it, and appearing to have a fair degree of success in the process. Current public events dominating the scene in Sydney at present are a case in point. While the young church in Corinth was trying to impress its surrounding culture with 'spectacular gifts' like 'speaking in tongues' and 'miraculous healings', Paul had to remind them that the most important 'gift'

is the clear, faithful proclamation of God's revealed truth in his Word ('prophecy'), preached and taught with love. What we need more than anything else today is wisdom and discernment as we seek to be 'ambassadors for Christ' (2 Corinthians 5:20), and to live as 'citizens of heaven' (Philippians 1:27; 3:20) and as 'aliens and strangers in the world' (1 Peter 2:11). It's a tricky task, and this wisdom and discernment will come from the regular reading of God's Word and being part of a fellowship where it is faithfully preached and discussed in small encouragement groups. As Paul says: "if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?"

## Today's Quick Word Luke 20:2-4

*By Bruce Christian*

**LUKE 20:2-4** Tell us by what authority you are doing these things,” [the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders] said. “Who gave you this authority?” [Jesus] replied, “I will also ask you a question. Tell me, John’s baptism -was it from heaven, or from men?”

I like the story about the man who asked a Rabbi, “Why do Jews always answer a question with another question?,” to which he received the answer, “Why shouldn’t they?” Many questions that we are asked by unbelievers and sceptics are not a seeking for enlightenment, but an attempt to trap us, to score a point in debate and to confirm them in their unbelief because we can’t give them a ‘satisfactory’ answer. This was true of most of the questions I have been asked in school SRE classes! It was also true of the question put to Jesus about the source of his authority (cf 19:47). Jesus always gave a genuine answer to genuine questions (cf 10:29-37), but was not slow to expose hypocrisy. My experience, when questioned about things involving the historicity of the account of Creation in Genesis 1, or of the whole human race having its origin in two real people, Adam and Eve, or of the universality of the Flood requiring that we

are also all descendants of Noah and his wife (Genesis 6-9), is that it is best to ask the ‘questioner’ for a better explanation of the way things are, one that is more consistent with the available scientific evidence! I am presently reading through the Book of Job (using the M’Cheyne program), and have just read Job 34. In this chapter, Elihu disparages the godly Job because he can’t give a ‘satisfactory’ answer to the problem of why a just, holy and all-powerful God would, or even could, inflict punishment and pain on someone as ‘blameless’ as Job. Most of us can identify with the perplexity of God’s providence in our own lives or in the lives of people we love, and so we feel for Job as he listens to Elihu and cannot respond with a ‘reasonable’ explanation. (I have just visited a friend in hospital who for more than a decade has been living through a Job-like situation, and it was inspiring and humbling to hear him praying, giving thanks to God for all his goodness!) Let us be content to leave some of the ‘hard’ questions unanswered, but to trust the God who understands, and IS able to sustain us, and those we love, even through the most difficult, faith-testing circumstances!

## Today's Quick Word Exodus 16:4

*By Bruce Christian*

**EXODUS 16:4** Then the LORD said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.

As I meditate on this verse and its application to my attitudes and actions, I am challenged by the degree to which I am influenced by pragmatism. I live in, and in too great a sense am part of, a culture that judges the ‘correctness’ of something by whether it ‘works’ or not: the ‘correct’ approach to evangelism is the method that gets the most number of people through our church doors; the ‘correct’ way to raise children is to minimise discipline or instruction and to let them make their own decisions and to discover for themselves what is the best way to go, so as not to put undue stress on them; etc. But what I learn here from the God who made me and who has my daily welfare at heart, is that I am to trust what he says BECAUSE he says it, and to strive to bring my attitudes and actions into line with it, regardless of what my natural instincts might be ‘telling’ me, and regardless of whether it seems to ‘work’ or not! I don’t find this easy. Sometimes I have to “let God be true, and every man a liar. ... so that [HE] may be proved right when [he] speak[s]

and prevail when [he] judge[s].” (Romans 3:4). Sometimes I have to accept that “faith is being sure of what we hope for and CERTAIN OF WHAT WE DO NOT SEE.” (Hebrews 11:1). The Covenant God of Israel, the LORD, chose to feed and satisfy the hunger and needs of his people by means of a day-by-day dependent process, based on their unwavering TRUST in his promise and provision, regardless of their ‘common sense’ and their ‘logic’ and native intuition. This ‘trust’ was to be the ‘test’ of their allegiance and commitment to him. Do I ‘trust’ his revealed truth in Scripture like this? The Author of Hebrews gives different examples of his definition of ‘faith’ - “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.” (Hebrews 11:3). Do I believe what he tells me clearly in Genesis 1? Would I be prepared to take God at his Word and spend 100 years building a large boat when there was not much water close handy (Hebrews 11:7)? Would I be prepared to follow God’s instruction and set out to sacrifice a son on whose life and prosperity/productivity depended my whole future (Hebrews 11:17-18)? These are not easy questions to answer, but they are a test of my commitment to God and his inspired Word.