

DRY BONES

God Still Has The Last Word

by JAMIE BUCKINGHAM



I have found I must qualify all my "absolutes." This is really tough for a fellow like me who has always believed he had the last word on everything. However, painfully, I have come to realize I do not have a final word from God on anything. Not yet.

Several years ago I made a decision to throw away all my credit cards. Like most decisions I make, I immediately determined that what was right for me was right for everyone else. I wrote several articles and preached several sermons saying this was absolutely the will of God.

Heavy stuff. It was the will of God for me, for I had come to the painful realization that the basic principle of "buy now, pay later" is Satan's way to ensnare God's children in financial bondage.

"Owe no man anything but love," the Bible says. I had disobeyed that command, for my relationship with the Friendly Finance Fellows was anything but love. So, I tore up all my credit cards.

A friend of mine, the founder of a large ministry, took issue with me. He said God had called him to a walk of faith, and it took more faith to borrow \$1 million and believe God to supply the funds to repay, than it did to raise the cash ahead of time.

That kind of "faith" however, invites people to jump off temple pinnacles, tells them not to go to doctors, and suggests it is better to go out in the morning and command the rocks to turn to bread rather than getting a job and buying bread like everyone else.

We never did come to an agreement, although I am totally out of debt and he owes the banks more than \$1 million at 14 percent interest and has recently been investigated by a grand jury for possible fraud.

Yet, even though the basic principle of "cash on the barrelhead" is sound, to turn it into a hard and fast rule — an absolute — is foolish. There are times, I now understand, when God allows his children to borrow money, or use credit cards.



Illustration by Dee Deloy

"The wise man is always teachable, always changing, always growing. Only the fool presumes to know as much as God."

My friend, Jim Underwood, president of the National Institute of Christian Financial Planning, helped me see the difference between borrowing money to buy things that depreciate (washing machines, TV sets and automobiles) and borrowing money to buy things that increase in value (real estate,

houses, or even church buildings.) The secret is to make sure the bank is serving you, rather than you serving the bank.

The same principle applies to the Christian and his credit cards. Rather than carrying a large amount of cash, credit cards are handy instruments. But you should never use them to buy more than you can pay for at the end of the month. That way you escape paying interest and make the credit card company work for you, rather than you working for them at 18 percent.

My financial "absolutes" are not the only areas of my life which have demanded modification.

To state dogmatically that it is "always" God's will to heal sickness, despite the various "proof texts" in the Bible is to presume you are as smart as God. As valid as the written word (*logos*) is, until it is inspired and made alive by the "now" word of the Holy Spirit (*rhema*) it is dead legalism. If we lock ourselves into any theological viewpoint, to the exclusion of anything else God may be saying, we're in for some rough times when our proclamations to the stones reap only echos, rather than fresh bread.

A young friend, getting ready to enter an evangelical Bible school, wrote and said he wanted to get his theology straight now so that 20 years hence he wouldn't have to change his mind.

He's on his way to becoming a graduate pharisee.

Over the last 12 years, since the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, I've had to revise every doctrine I held dear — water baptism, communion, salvation, miracles, the Holy Spirit, the person of Christ, even the inspiration of the Bible. And I am still revising.

My fundamentalist friends say I'm unstable. But better to be a live tree, growing and subject to the pain of the pruner's shears, than an ornamental orange tree made of concrete and good for nothing except to be a toilet seat for theological pigeons.

The wise man is teachable, always changing, always growing. Only the fool presumes to know as much as God.

If you need absolutes, try these never lean to your own understanding always put your faith in the Promise rather than the promise. <