

pray publicly and privately, commune with many believers, study His Word, preach, and serve in many leadership roles. I am blessed with a devoted believing wife and two great sons and the opportunity to earn a living for our family. My earthly life is not drastically different than most people in our country. Except, I stopped searching for God when I accepted His truth. The balance of my life has been dedicated to knowing and understanding Him better *through* His Word. None of *my* preferences can replace His Word. I have not sought private messages from God as some nowadays believe they should, but accept that His Word is my source of direction as I continue my own private “journey.”

God alone knows the time and distance of the journey for each of us and *only* His map, the Scriptures, will guide us through it.

GOD KNOWS THAT —

Success is a word man assigns to accomplishing a goal, yet is only a moment in one’s life.

Service to others is the means by which we accomplish the purpose for which we are created.

Failure is usually a result not of inability, but lack of commitment to a cause and is also a moment in one’s life.

Our life is the span of time He gives us to succeed some and fail some in our service to others.

And thus we fulfill our purpose.

by Dennis Owens



DILIGENCE

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11

A ministry of Dennis and Sherri Owens

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*Note from Sherri — Our original purpose for beginning Diligence was to encourage Bible study among its readers. Since that first issue, we have discussed many Scriptures and certainly intend to continue to do so. We assure you that our purpose has not changed even though this particular issue is somewhat different. We **hope** to return to a regular study with the next issue. We ask your patience with this brief deviation from our purpose. There are several reasons for this temporary change.*

*Due to some **very** unusual and extremely pressing business commitments of Dennis’ time for the next month or so, there are simply not enough hours in the day to allow us the time to do justice to a Bible study for this issue. We considered suspending Diligence for a couple of issues during this time but determined not to do so. Instead, we have decided to use an alternative solution that we hope you will tolerate.*

We recently returned from vacation at a beautiful lake in Tennessee. During the time we were there, Dennis scribbled down some “philosophical meanderings” (as I like to call them). He does this on a fairly frequent basis but they generally either end up in a file drawer somewhere or eventually in a waste basket. But rather than temporarily suspend Diligence we decided to use his most recent “meanderings” to fill the gap. We hope you will enjoy them and that they will provide some “food for thought” until we return to a regular study as soon as possible. Thank you for your patience. Incidentally, if you would please keep Dennis in your prayers, we would appreciate it very much. He is currently taking a full time class (in addition to his regular full time work) to prepare for a 6 hour test that he will be taking on July 24th. It’s a very difficult test and passing it is absolutely necessary. So, all prayers will be greatly appreciated.

And now, please turn to page 2 for the —

“Philosophical Meanderings of a Somewhat Past Middle Aged Man.”

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In Search Of
by Dennis Owens

As I read and study the Bible and attempt to infiltrate God's Word into every day events, I am driven by a need. The need is placed in me by God and is one that can only be filled by Him. The void that exists because of separation from Him exists because of me, not Him. My sinful and rebellious nature is the culprit. There is a drive to satisfy my yearning to be in sync with my Creator. I believe this feeling exists in all human beings to some extent (Psalm 42:1).

Many define this drive to know, as their "religious journey." I have noticed that religious journeys will take one of two major courses. 1) The search is done with an attitude of "Question Authority" as noted on bumper stickers in recent years. Or, 2) Accept Authority, and allow it to be a guide. I believe the Bible to be a worthy authority for a journey to get in sync with God.

Society has many remedies aimed at synchronizing our lives with the Creator by removing or changing the feeling that we experience when we are separated from Him. It is proposed that there is much need for compromise and broader understanding of each person as an individual. Thus the search goes forward for many people.

In today's postmodern culture, there is much rejection of authority or any practice done by our ancestors. The ultimate result of the postmodern culture's approach to seeking God is that we must discover our *own* truth. Therefore, this approach indicates that truth is not absolute but rather subject to *us*, and our acceptance of it as truth.

At no time in our Countries history has our society so readily embraced beliefs that have no Biblical basis. At the same time, Bible based teaching is under attack on numerous fronts. The influence of "New Age" and "Secular Humanism" is very pervasive and intertwined within religious material today. Postmodern writers have very skillfully aligned Biblical truth with modern thinking and made it very challenging to discern compromises that are made to God's Word. Many writers today offer numerous ways to get "*closer*" to the place we are told we should be spiritually. In the process, many fill their void with a false spiritualism that reduces basic truths to a level of opinions and traditions of our ancestors. Once reduced to something less than truth, they can then be easily discarded like yesterdays newspaper.

Another way we can be fooled in the search, is by believing that if we just *do* something *different* we move closer to God. Perhaps if we meditate, walk a labyrinth or get into group therapy or if our group worship was just more lively, or less lively or possibly a retreat is the answer or our body position when we pray and sing. Some say it is in doing good works, while others say they get

closer to God by spending more time alone with God. Certainly some of these things might give us a momentary feeling of being closer to God. It seems strange to me that those who believe that the Bible *is* the authority of absolute truth, would *continue* to question the nearness of their God when we are promised by *His very Word* that His Own Spirit is sent to *dwell in us* at the moment we are baptized (Acts 2:38). One possibility for this questioning is that people no longer accept God's Word as complete and therefore continue to expect new revelations, thus lacking confidence in taking God at His word. How can God get any *more* near to us than dwelling within our very beings? Continuing a never ending search for "feeling" closer to God is a lack of faith in accepting the promise He made to us. Continuing to doubt His closeness unless we have some sort of spectacular "feeling" to reassure us would thus seem to indicate that our faith is in "feelings" rather than in God. If reassurance continues to be necessary rather than just accepting His promise on faith, we are met then with the new challenge to keep the close feeling going. This brings about the unending search for a new high point in our relationship to God rather than simply accepting that He is always there — because He *said* He is.

There is *one* historical event and *only* one that had the ability to remove the distance that our sin has placed between God and ourselves. This is of course Christ's life, death, burial and resurrection.

We often talk about bearing our cross. What does it mean and is it something that each of us has in common? Of what does the weight of the cross consist? Let me suggest a few possibilities.

The weight of our cross might be our need:

- To feel more spiritual
- To be free in Christ
- To be able to express ourselves better
- To share the Gospel with others
- To reduce my dependence on earthly affirmations
- To learn to accept truth in a cynical unbelieving world
- To have a yielding spirit
- To know how to love others as God loves us
- To know and accept that God simply *is*, — not something or someone who is lost and needs found.

It is my cross to do the will of God with my life. Our crosses alone are sufficient to keep us focused daily on our need and dependence on God.

Unlike many people I was born into a Bible believing family. Their belief, as great as it was and is, did not bring me closer to God. Only when I acknowledged Christ as *my* Savior and met him in the watery grave of baptism did the distance disappear. Since that time I have had the opportunity to teach, lead singing,