

each of our worship gatherings. Each team usually consists of eight singers with microphones (2 sopranos, 2 altos, 2 tenors, 2 basses). This ministry provides a weekly opportunity for singers to use their gifts to help people see Jesus.” The site goes on to list *specific vocal requirements* to participate in praise teams. They also list Elizabeth Patterson as their staff “Children’s Minister.”

**Anthony Fischetto** — is an author, national speaker, licensed psychologist, and ministry leader. — Anthony served at the Shillington Church of Christ (Pennsylvania) since 1989 as the Youth Minister for six years.

We found *his* name *especially* interesting since we *have* one of his books (*Transformed: Intimacy With God*). We found that book to be “jam-packed” with New Age teachings involving “spiritual disciplines” that *include* New Age type meditation (*not* “Christian Meditation” as stated below on the *Winterfest* website link) as well as numerous *other* New Age practices and concepts. The link from the *Winterfest* website had this to say about Dr. Fischetto:

“Dr. Fischetto’s book helps you develop these spiritual practices the Barna Study say are rare. Anthony will be conducting a class for all the youth leaders during Winterfest 2012 at Arlington and Gatlinburg teaching how to practice Christian Meditation for greater intimacy with God and to help others development [sic] a deeper faith and connection with God. ... Tony is available to speak on Spiritual Disciplines, Intimacy with God, Stress Management, Conflict Resolution, Personality Styles, Marital Issues and other topics.”

**David Bowden** — <http://davidbowdenpoetry.com/about> —

“David follows the tradition of the Beat Poets of the 1950’s and Slam Poets of the 1980’s. David uses poetry to challenge and inspire individuals and groups to give a voice to the voiceless, promote social justice, and care for the needy throughout the world. David writes and performs for non-profits, activist movements, and youth conferences around the country. David is married and living in Oklahoma City, working as the Executive Director of the non-profit Give a Goat.” We would like to add here that some of the lyrics of Mr. Bowden’s - uh - offerings(?) were - uh - uh - indescribable(?) - you’ll just have to look for yourself!

Have we done our “due diligence” not only for ourselves but also for our children? We, as well as our children *will* be exposed to countless false teachers — with or without *Winterfest*. *Winterfest* is not *all* bad — but we must teach our children to not “buy into” *everything* they *hear*. They — as well as ourselves must *discern* whether or not what *is* heard measures up to the Word of God. The hints, implications and subtle suggestions that are *not* according to the Bible must be sorted out from the things that *are* according to the Bible. That can *only* be accomplished through being *trained* in the Word of God and practicing discernment.

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# 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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Issue 1

## DECEIVED! — Through Hints, Implications and Subtle Suggestions

“A prudent man seeth the evil, and hideth himself; But the simple pass on, and suffer for it.” (Proverbs 22:3 ASV)

There are many ways in which individuals — including Christians — are easily deceived into accepting teachings and theologies that are not in accordance with the Scriptures. We will be discussing a very *common* way this happens in the next issue of *Diligence*. But first, we want to discuss a more *dangerous* way in which this occurs that is far more stealth in nature since it creeps very *slowly* into the minds and hearts of Christians. *This* way is *so* stealth that Christians who fail to have their ears on “high alert” *all* of the time, can easily fall victim to accepting beliefs, concepts and ideas that are far from Scriptural.

How does that happen, you say? Easily. We live in a society that *demand*s political correctness and demeans any who refuse to go along with the current trends. Those in the New Testament church can quite easily buy into a kind of political correctness that lumps all of society into one big congenial group. Any one who takes a stand and *refuses* to *join* the “can’t we all just get along” group, is often seen as someone who is just disagreeable. The problem is that being agreeable with *some* things is not always acceptable to God.

“Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when **they shall separate you** from their company, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake.” (Luke 6:22-23 ASV)

“But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and **he shall separate them** one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats;” (Matt. 25:31-32 ASV)

“And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? for we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore Come ye out from among them, and **be ye separate**, saith the Lord, And touch no unclean thing; And I will receive you,” (II Cor. 6:16-17 ASV)

So how does all of this tie-in to being deceived through hints, implications and subtle suggestions? Think of it this way — there are *numerous* trends that we as Christians, can — and often *do* — get caught-up in. Do we *really* consider whether or not those trends are acceptable to God? What about the things that *seem* completely harmless — perhaps even *good* for our spiritual well-being. Are we *really* keeping

our ears “perked-up” *all* of the time and digging deep into that current trend? Maybe it *is* good for us — but have we made absolutely *certain* of that? Is that popular author of Christian fiction that we so much enjoy reading influencing our interpretation of the Scriptures — causing us to move away from the solid principles that we have always used? Are we perhaps very gradually “buying-into” a theology that isn’t in accordance with the Bible? What about the lyrics of that contemporary Christian music that we frequently listen to? Are the lyrics *really* in accordance with what is taught in the Bible — or if we were to *think* about the words to which we “sing along,” would we conclude that they are very subtly teaching something contrary to the Bible? Do we keep foremost in our minds that the *goal* of the “christian music” genre (as well as christian authors) is *only* to *sell* books and/or music — not necessarily to abide by the Scriptures? These are all questions that each individual must answer for him or her self.

In the last several years however, there has been an explosion of changes that have began moving into the New Testament Church. There has for example, been a tremendous effort toward establishing unity with various denominations — unity for the sake of unity rather than unity based on the Scriptures. That effort is causing some Christians to abandon a mindset of separatism. We saw in those verses above however that God *expects* His children to be separate from the world. So is the “can’t we all just get along” trend something that we as Christians should buy into? It would be *easy* to get along with numerous denominations if we added a rock band to our worship services, had communion only once a month, held worship services on Saturday evening *as well as* on Sunday morning, etc. Accepting those kinds of things will go a *long* way toward convincing others that we’re *trying* to be *agreeable* — instead of just being *difficult*. That’s what is often implied by those who are in favor of *softening* a separatist position on such things. *Are* we just being difficult? Or are we sticking to the Scriptures? Have we each “studied it out” for ourselves? Do we know *why* we believe what we believe? *Should* we remain separate from certain trends — or should we be more congenial? Think about it. Is it Biblical to be separatists? Or is it Biblical to follow the “can’t we all just get along” trend?

*“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.” (Rom. 16:17-18 NKJV)*

Let’s go now in a bit of a different direction with this idea. What about things in which we let our children get involved? Do we *really* know about the events or the trends in which *they* become involved? Have *we* done *our* homework? Do we know to whom and to what they will be exposed — or taught if we let — or perhaps even *encourage* them — to participate in any given trend or event? Isn’t it the responsibility of parents to do “due diligence” concerning our children’s activities? A definition for “due diligence” found in the dictionary is:

“the care that a prudent person might be expected to exercise in the examination and evaluation of risks affecting a business transaction” Should we practice any *less* “examination and evaluation of risks” that might potentially affect our *children*? Should we not do ample research — or “due diligence” — to have at *least* an *idea* about what might be implied, hinted, or suggested as a result of *their* exposure to an activity or trend? Will they hear “*smooth words and flattering speech*” that might deceive their young impressionable hearts?

At the risk of “being stoned” by some who are reading this article, we’ll use a *specific* example in the case of our children. We decided to use *this* specific example because we *thought* it would probably be an *easy* one — and it did not let us down.

Every year, (Feb. 17-19 *this* year) many of our youngsters attend an event called *Winterfest* in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. It’s an *extremely* popular event that *all* the kids want to attend — it’s just the “in” thing to do. While we’ve never been to the event ourselves, our youngest son *did* attend once or twice several years ago. So — we decided to visit the *Winterfest* website. It seemed to be pretty much the same as always — just different entertainers — current to this time — and a few new speakers. One of the speakers listed especially “perked up” our ears. He has spoken at *Winterfest* for many years now — and we *still* have the same concerns about him that we had all those years ago when our son attended. The man is a fantastic speaker. He relates to teens *really* well. He uses illustrations to teach lessons that are superb. Wondering if his theology might have changed over the years, we followed the web site link to more info about him. According to the web site of the congregation for which he is “senior minister,” they have two worship services every Sunday. The first is — according to the website — “traditional - A cappella.” The second is “contemporary - instrumental.” Their motto is “One Church — Two Styles.” Really? Two *styles*? This gentleman is well know for using his marvelous sense of humor and exceptional speaking ability to make numerous sarcastic remarks about the a capella Churches of Christ. He is firmly convinced that the use of instruments in worship is nothing more than a matter of opinion. That’s fine *if he* wants to believe that. It’s *also* fine if some of us choose to disagree with that assessment of the Scriptures. The point we want to make here is that the youth who attend that event will undoubtedly have this gentleman’s “doctrine” explained to them in an *exceptionally* interesting, witty, intriguing and likeable manner. Maybe this particular issue doesn’t concern *everyone* who is reading this article. But those whom it *does* concern, should ask themselves exactly what *other* hints, implications and subtle suggestions might be made by some of the *other* speakers, entertainers and comedians. So we looked at the web sites of the congregations with whom *a few* of the *others* listed on *Winterfest’s* web site were affiliated. Here’s *a small portion* of what we found:

**Josh Ross** — Sycamore View Church of Christ — Memphis, TN — Preaching Minister — <http://sycamoreview.sitewrench.com/home>  
Sycamore View describes the function of their praise teams this way —

“Our Praise Teams sing with our worship leader to provide vocal leadership in