

SERMON, CLASS, and/or ANNOUNCEMENT NOTES:

Horizontal lines for notes.

THIS WEEK'S CLASS SCHEDULE
SUNDAY MORNING PROVERBS: Finishing Lesson 7 @ X. Begin Lesson 8
WEDNESDAY EVENING GOSPEL OF JOHN: John 11:44—?

THE SENSE

“they read from the Law and gave the sense, helping them to understand”
(Nehemiah 8:8)

GIVING ‘THE SENSE’—BY ROSS OLDENKAMP

Although I have not been familiar with the bulk of bro. Greg Litmer’s writings, I am confident from what I have heard from him in the pulpit, that his articles have been helpful and that his hard work has been appreciated by those who have read him.

The opportunity to carry on with an instructional bulletin has fallen to me. Of course, you can count on me having the same dedication to the truth, without regard for speculations, opinions, and useless contentions.

Beginning in January, 2019, the NKY Searcher” will become “The Sense.” Some of you may immediately recognize the phrase as having come from Nehemiah 8. In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, the scriptures tell of Israel gathered together as one man in the open square listening to Ezra read the words of the Law and give the sense, helping them to understand the reading.’ What does that mean, he “gave the sense?” It certainly does not mean that he “added to the Law” (Deut. 4:2), but he did make clarifications and applications of the Law to the lives of those who heard.

Helping others to “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15) is one of

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NORTHERN KENTUCKY CHURCH OF CHRIST

Elders:

Greg Litmer, Craig Powell, Bob Rice, Marvin Saylor

Evangelists:

Greg Litmer & Ross Oldenkamp

Sunday AM Worship 9:45
Sunday AM Bible Study 11:10
Sunday PM Worship 6:00
Wednesday PM Bible Study 7:30

18 Scott Drive
Florence, KY 41042
(859) 371-2095

www.nkcofc.com

GIVING THE SENSE (CONT.)

the noblest and most rewarding activities known to man. Imagine what a privilege it is to be able to help make sense of the will of God in a sinner's life, as Philip did for the eunuch who desperately wanted to understand, but could not. He, exasperatingly asked, "How can I [understand] unless someone guides me?" As exciting a work as it is, and rewarding too, the work of helping people make sense of God's will is very serious business and should not be entered into carelessly. James warned, "*Be not many of you teachers, knowing that you will receive a stricter judgment*" (James 3:1). The apostle Paul warned Timothy to *give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, to meditation*, because his work had eternal ramifications (1 Tim. 4:13-16).

Undertaking such an important work, it would be easy to develop a heightened sense of self-importance, especially on the part of those who are especially gifted at understanding and imparting the knowledge of the scriptures. Paul's rationale for not being puffed up as a steward of the mysteries of God is summed up in the following question: "*What do we have, that we did not receive?*" (1 Cor. 4:7) Whatever gifts and abilities we have, were given to us by God. In addition, most of us, even the most gifted among us, have a host of faithful brethren who have helped us make "sense" of and encourage us in the scriptures, to whom we should be thankful, and because of whom we should be humble.

Speaking of the need for others to help us make sense of the scriptures, I'll admit that if I had been reading my scroll of Exodus two thousand years ago, I probably would not have understood that God was offering me insight into the afterlife through His exchange with Moses at the burning bush. Jesus "gave the sense" to the Sadducees in Matthew 22:31-32 by helping them understand that God spoke of Abraham as being alive, even five-hundred years later, in the days of Moses. Jesus also explained that it was not to Moses, but to every generation after him, that He spoke. In other words, this knowledge was available to anybody who heard and thought critically about its implications. Likewise, I am certain that I would not have recognized the similarities between Jonah's "three days and three nights in the belly of the fish" and Christ's "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" if not for a Man of God "making sense" of it for me (Lk. 11:29). Yet, Christ seems

GIVING THE SENSE (CONT.)

to indicate in Luke 24 that there were indications in the Old Testament of that very fact—"***Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day.***" (24:46) My question for you is, "Where was this written?" Jesus taught that it was written in Jonah, although without Jesus making the connection it would have been impossible to draw this conclusion conclusively. These examples demonstrate the need that we all have for each other in the Lord, to help one another come to a deeper understanding of the mind of God by studying carefully and thinking critically. That is the intent of our bulletin.

With that in mind, I do intend from time to time, to make use of various authors in "The Sense" whose writings serve the expressed purpose of helping us understand the scriptures better, and our responsibilities in light of them. According to Neh. 8:7, even Ezra, being a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses, made good use of: Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, all of whom helped to "give the sense" in those days.

One final word about "giving the sense." When doing so, it is important that we speak plainly. In Habakkuk 2:2, God tells the prophet to "write the vision and *make it plain.*" We are not "giving the sense" when our teaching leaves the hearer with more questions than answers and wondering, "What was the point? What was the application?" Or worse, "What was the author's position on that subject?" That kind of teaching is not helpful, and it may end up doing more harm than good. With this, the law of Christ agrees, "*For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken?*" (1 Cor. 14:8-9) If at any point "the Sense" fails to live up to its name, I welcome your correspondence. May God bless our efforts in His Kingdom!

Do you know your Bible?

- 1) For what sin did God reject Saul as king?
- 2) What was Barnabas' nickname?