



August 30, 2024

That Invisible Gorilla

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast of lower Alabama. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Back in September of 2008 I gave a sermon message where near the introduction of the message I played a famous video that lasted about a minute and one half that many of you may be aware of.

The Invisible Gorilla is a book published in 2010, co-authored by Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons. This title of the book refers to an earlier research project by Chabris and Simons revealing that “people who are focused on one thing can easily overlook something else which should be quite obvious”.

To demonstrate this effect, they created a video where several students bounce passed a basketball between themselves. Viewers asked to count the number of times the players with the white shirts pass the ball often failed to notice a person in a gorilla suit who appears in the center of the image (see the Invisible Gorilla Test), an experiment described as "one of the most famous psychological demos ever". Simons and Chabris were awarded an Ig Nobel Prize for the Invisible Gorilla experiment.

I asked a question in the onset of my message. “Truthfully, how many of you missed the monkey the first time?” The reply I received was “What Monkey?” The video makes a very clear, concise point...sometimes what we perceive, well may not actually be what reality is!

So, friends, I ask you and me this question. How easily are you influenced or persuaded by what you see, by what you hear, and/or by what you read?

Do friends and/or associates influence your opinions and decisions? How much influence does the opinion or belief of others have on you?

Do we follow the crowd or do we see ourselves as being independent thinkers, able to make up our own mind, seriously considering the facts?

What influences help us to form our perception/opinions on controversial subjects, for example? Let's be honest, we all have thoughts or opinions on various different controversial subjects. And these days, almost every subject is subject to controversy.

And where this really hits home to us as “Christians” is when it comes to the Word of God, what we might believe, and what we might teach.

Public perception is probably the most important factor today in the political arena. The “leaders” want to know how they are doing in the polls. They want to know what people think.

And here’s the rub. If we are not careful, we too can have our perception influenced! And, it will spill over into our daily lives.

You see, public opinion had a great deal to do with the life and death of our Savior Jesus Christ.

During His ministry many of the people who saw Jesus Christ believed in Him. They were moved by Him. They saw the miracles; they watched Him perform miracles; they sat and they listened to Him teach. In fact we are told at one point they wanted to make Him a king. They put Him up on their shoulders and they actually wanted to make Him a king. He was, as we might say today, their hero. In fact some of the disciples really thought that He was going to have an overthrow

of the Roman government and bring the Kingdom of Israel back to its days of glory. Of course we know that didn't happen.

What they also didn't realize, was that two thousand years was going to go by... They thought that He was their teacher and hero, but the Pharisees (The religious leaders of the time) who were absolutely jealous, insanely so, hated Him. They frankly couldn't stand Him.

Why? Because He was a threat to their authority. At first they didn't lay a hand on Him. You've read the scriptures that talked about the fact that they would not lay hands on this Man. Why? It tells us they feared the people. In the beginning He was very popular. They didn't want to upset their own authority by doing something that would cause them a problem because they feared the people.

So what did they do? They set out to change public opinion. They set out to change the perception of this Man. They employed the services of a thief and a spy named Judas. They spread half-truths and lies, innuendoes, and accusations. The Pharisees eventually painted this Man from Galilee as a criminal, accusing Him of things like blasphemy and the like.

So, did it work? Were they able to change the perception of people who had sat in the synagogues and listened to Him preach? Yes it did. Sadly, it did work.

John 18:33 Then Pilate entered the judgement hall again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" - Notice the answer that Christ gave him because in the answer, we can very easily see that He understood the perception of Him had been changed because He answers this way in verse 34 – Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?"

What He is was saying to Pilate was. *Did you figure this out by yourself, or who told you this?*

So, in the current political arena we find ourselves in this nation, might we be ever so careful to consider how it might spill over into our personal lives, into our places of worship, and how we view and treat others?

You see, you and I might just miss “The Invisible Gorilla” if we are not careful. It is why we are told in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 “*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*” Might we add, not only good, but true and factual, not perceived?

Pray for Godly discernment which comes from the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit, and remember as time marches on we will indeed be tested and tried as to if we will be faithful to our Father and His Son and the calling we received. And, whether it is true and reality, well, is indeed critical to you and me.

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.



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