



## *Following Directions*

Last month my daughter was performing a science experiment at home and while the experiment should have been safe to do there was a problem. When I arrived home that evening I learned that there had been a mishap involving popcorn, the microwave and some Tupperware. After discussing this with her, I found that the procedures had been followed, to a point, but the real problem was in the materials used. The experiment called for a glass bowl, water or some other medium and popcorn. A few substitutions were made and the result was that the popcorn failed to “cook” adequately and the bowl had been damaged. In the physical world we can look at incidents like this and realize that when the requirements to perform a task are not met, the end result is less than desirable. I was also reminded of an individual who was in the news years ago who had a housefire after heating gasoline on a stove to clean auto parts. It is not hard in situations like this to realize what went wrong and one has to wonder why people take such risks without thinking things through. We hear of people who think that something is a good idea but in practice the thought leads to accidents and sometimes death. Religiously, it is interesting to see how most folks will accept a “recipe” for salvation and living without knowing the proper materials and procedures required. Like the science experiment I mentioned above, there are instructions on how to become a Christian, and requirements for faithfulness following one’s conversion, and yet we see that this is rarely followed. Nothing seems to be amiss and believers recount their experiences and blessings from God with great zeal, all the while unmindful that they are neither “saved” nor proceeding in an authorized manner. The scriptures are clear on this point as we turn to the Bible. Christ told his disciples to “...*teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ...*” (Matt 28.19-20). We find that there were those in the scriptures who were zealous but religiously wrong who needed to be-

lieve on Christ (Acts 8.36-38). The belief that is exemplified here denotes a change in the way that one worships God. In essence we can call this change repentance and was specified on the day of Pentecost as Peter spoke to the multitudes (Acts 2.36-38). We find that an admission of the desire to meet God’s requirements and express genuine acceptance of the authority of Christ is needed as well. This is part of the process of conversion, confession or the admission of one’s belief in Christ as the son of God (Rom 10.9-10). A final step in this process is that of baptism and every example of conversion in the book of Acts ends with this. We find that baptism, while being argued against, is necessary and is the point at which God applies the blood of Christ to our souls thus forgiving the sins that have been committed. Peter states that this is the “... *the answer of a good conscience toward God...*” (1 Pet 3.21). Paul tells us that this is the point at which we are figuratively buried with Christ into his death and are raised to walk in newness of life (Rom 6.3-4). Paul told the Galatians, “*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” (Gal 3.27). John adds that we are to be faithful unto death in the message given to him by Christ (Rev 2.10). Faithfulness toward God means that we are going to do things in the manner prescribed in the scriptures and will continue to change things as we gain knowledge (1 Pet 2.2). The science experiment gone bad, mentioned at the beginning, did not render the bowl completely unusable, but it did not have the same properties as before and is not suitable for some things. In the same way, when we reject the doctrine of the Bible, exchanging it for a manmade idea, we may have some usefulness and value in the world but will not be fit for true service. The mishap with the popcorn could have been avoided had more time been spent reading and following the directions. The same is true of our service to God. Not following the directions the Lord has given will not render us worthless but will keep us out of Heaven if we do not take the time to get the facts.