

What's Our Problem?

by Gary Henry

"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

Difficulties are not hard to find. The average person's life presents a thorny thicket of problems that have to be dealt with. Indeed, on some days it seems we do little more than run from one problem to the next. We can hardly get one fire put out before another breaks out somewhere else.

But out of all the things that need fixing, which one needs fixing the most? Which issue in life is the main issue? One measure of our spiritual maturity (and even our earthly maturity) is the way in which we prioritize our problems. (Mt 6:33) The immature give most of their attention to problems that are of no more than secondary importance, while the more mature see the things that matter most and give their primary attention to those things. So if the way we spend our time and the problems we choose to work on are any indication, how mature can we say we are, really and truly?

Anyone who has read the New Testament will know that it takes a definite position on the question of what's important and what's not. Jesus put it in the form of a question: "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his soul?" (Mt 16:26) Our main

problem is our broken relationship with God. As long as that problem goes unfixed, we are pathetic and profitless creatures, even if we're able to fix every other problem in the world.

Millions of people would say "Amen" to the importance of God — but these same people spend most of their time working on issues other than their relationship to Him. Our schedule books simply don't support our claim that spiritual concerns are No. 1 in our lives. We rush through our days, accomplishing little more than the rearrangement of deck chairs on a ship that is sinking.

The daily challenge that confronts us is not only to see what most needs to be worked on, but to keep that concern in the center of our attention and focus. In the end, it will be evident that most of the "urgent" matters that tried to claim our attention were simply inconsequential. Before it's too late, we need to stop our frantic fixing of things "out there" and start working on things "in here."

"It is not a world out of joint that makes our problem but the shipwrecked soul in it" (P. T. Forsyth).



Lisa Carter (Daniel's mother)	Jesse and Martha Godwin (Troy's parents)	Barbara Hasty (Ryan's mom)	Louise Pack (Anna and Christopher's grandmother)
Howard Vaughan (Mary Ann's grandfather)	Mary Edwards (Sandra Chason's mom)	Kimzey Simpson	Ruth Addison (gmom of April and Julie)
Tory Colvin (sister of Case O'Dell)	Maria Williams	Barbara Chandler	Donna Jackson (Kristen's aunt)
Betty Bradford	Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey's dad)	Earl Mitchell (Debbi Coleman's dad)	Abbie Harrison
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	EB & Ara Belle Rich (Joanetta's aunt)	Bobby Jennings (Brooke's uncle)	Doug Bailey (Keith's brother)
Helen Andrews (Susan's sister)	William and Toni Herd	Taina Acuff (Anna's aunt)	Mavis Hale (Chris Long's grandmother)

May Birthdays

- 1-Daniel Eison
- 2-Effie Kirby
- 3-Paula Davis
- 3-William Smith
- 7-Isaiah Messer
- 7-Kyle Ogden
- 7-Cameron Ogden
- 10-Ian Norman
- 10-Ryan Hasty
- 10-Branson Williams
- 11-Scott Perkins
- 12-Frances Humphrey
- 13-Anna Grace Long
- 13-Jana Hall
- 15-Bryce Daniels
- 18-Curran LaChappelle
- 18-Heydi Perez
- 20-Kaleigh Williamson
- 24-Andy Roberts
- 25-Chuck Hahn
- 26-Fallon Hartsell
- 28-Barbara Weeks
- 28-Candy Long
- 29-Maria Williams
- 31-Rachel Tolliver

News and Notes

- ☒ - Remember the family of Jordan Oldag in the death of his grandfather, Wilbert Poehls.
- ☒ - Patsy Ogle's great-niece, Emery Anne Vest, was able to go home from Children's Hospital with meds for her heart.
- ☒ - We are happy to have Brady Newman as a new member with us!
- ☒ - Please pray for Debbi Coleman's family in the recent death of her cousin, Joe Welch.
- ☒ - Matt Hall's uncle, Randy Harshbarger, was able to go home after hip replacement and started physical therapy.
- ☒ - Remember John Berkebile's family in the death of his grandmother, Sue Berkebile.
- ☒ - VBS on "Parables of Jesus" will be June 10-13 in the evenings, 6-7:30.
- ☒ - Daniel Carter's mom, Lisa, will begin a trial treatment for her cancer this week at Vandy.
- ☒ - Ashley Miller's grandfather, Max Carter, continues stable but unresponsive since his surgery on April 3.
- ☒ - Continue to pray for Abbie Harrison as she recovers from knee surgery in ATL.
- ☒ - Pray for our expectant mothers: Sarah Bethea, Kristen Diehl and Nakia Strickland.

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Exegesis or Cop-Out?

By Jeffery Kingry

Is strictly exegetical discourse on the Word of God a legitimate method of teaching (An explanation or critical interpretation of a text)? Definitely. But what if there is a controversy surrounding a particular subject? Is it enough to merely quote the passages and claim "They mean what they say"? I believe the teacher, in this case, has fallen down on the job.

Scripture is not merely ink and paper—"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (Jno. 6:63). The Word of God has been given "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). When applied to practical living, God's word makes a man complete and perfectly equips him to do God's will (2 Tim. 3:17). It is the responsibility of the teacher therefore, to use the Word to give people what they need (Tit. 1:5; 2 Cor. 12:19-21). Whether the word is used to rebuke sin, prick a conscience, console, or build up a soul, the teacher must give what is needed to the listener. While David stood guilty of adultery, guile, murder, and deception, the prophet Nathan did not lecture him with an exegetical monologue on the Mosaic laws concerning Marriage-Divorce-Remarriage. He told David, "thou art the man" (2 Sam. 12:7)! Anything less would have been a cop-out.

Teaching that looks to some place other than the need of man to get right with God, that ignores specific sin, or overlooks error is both useless and deceptive. The purpose of the teacher is to communicate truth that it might bring forth a change on the part of the listener.

15). He taught the people who had the law of God and knew it. They could quote large portions of the text from memory, and there was a group of men called "the scribes and Pharisees" who did little except sit about and give profound exegesis to the people from the law. One commentator has said "Philo of Alexandria declares (ca. A.D. 40) that the Jews learned to read their scriptures from childhood, and Josephus (ca. A.D. 90) says young Jews learned their laws as well as their own names" (E. J. Goodspeed, A Life of Christ, p. 34). In a day before book, chapter, and verse divisions, concordances, and reference libraries, the people knew the scriptures well. As Paul commented to young Timothy, "that

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WE ARE NOT SAVED TO BE SILENT.
Ezekiel 3:18-19

Thoughts to Ponder

"When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, ... but his blood I will require at your hand.

(Ezekiel 3:18)

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class 9:30 AM
Worship 10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Classes 7:00 PM

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from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures. . . ." (2 Tim. 3:15). How and what did Jesus teach these Jews? He gave them what they needed. An example might be the sermon on the mount. Each of the beatitudes was contained in word and principle in the old law. Instead of saying "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3), why did he not merely give an exegesis of Psalms 51:17 or Isa. 57:15? Instead Jesus took the law and made application of the truth: "Ye have heard it said of them of old time. . . Thou shalt not kill . . . Thou shalt not commit adultery . . . Thou shalt not forswear thyself . . . An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth . . . love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy" (Matt. 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43). Why did not Jesus merely "state something in scriptural terms fairly used according to their context" without any comment on "local and temporal circumstances and situations" as is suggested by one brother (E. Fudge, "A Few Remarks," Gospel Guardian, Vol. 25 (July 19, 1973), p. 172)? Jesus was not interested in a dry exegetical dissertation on the scriptures he quoted. He took the "local and temporal circumstances and situations" and made specific application to the people's needs. His purpose was to communicate truth in such a way as to affect living. After hearing the words of Jesus the people knew how to give, pray, serve, live, and work for God in this world (Matt. 6). When Jesus finished making application directly to the people, "the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28, 29). Jesus's teaching was astonishing in that he took the scriptures that they were all comfortable with, the concepts that they had cherished so long, and using language that was understandable and applicable showed their true relevance. He used local events that they were all familiar with: Sacrifice in the temple (5:23, 24), the regional court of the Sanhedrin (5:25, 26), the turn of the seasons (5:45). Jesus used local and temporal characters that all were familiar with: The publicans (5:46-48), the hypocritical philanthropist (6:2), the long faced ascetic (6:5, 7, 16). Jesus used relationships that were common to all: Master-servant (6:24), Father-child (7:9-12). He made use of their bodies, the nature about them, the animals, the architecture in their lives to illustrate to them what they needed to know. The Jews knew the words in the scripture, but obviously not the applications.

This same usage of the word of God to communi-

cate truth is demonstrated throughout the rest of the N.T. Every quotation and allusion from the O.T. as used in the New is drawn on as a substantiative authority to prove a point-to make an argument-to teach the truth. There is no expository exegesis without purpose in application in all of the N.T.

Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32 to argue the case of the Apostles, that indeed their actions were a fulfillment of the prophet, and their message was divine (Acts 2:17-21). Stephen used many passages from the old testament when he "disputed" with the scholars of his day (Acts 6:9, 10; 7). He used them to support his message of Christ's resurrection, and to show the unfolding purpose of God in history, despite the disobedience of the Jews. The conclusion of his sermon would be what some might call "ungodly, unchristian, and unbecoming vilification of persons, misrepresentations of the grossest sort, and pawning of subjective and sometimes biased opinions" (E. Fudge, Ibid, p. 173). Anyway, I am sure the Jewish council and the High Priest thought so, for the "applying specifics" that Stephen made was "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have your fathers not persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before the coming of the Just One: Of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers! Who have received the law by the disposition of angels and have not kept it" (Acts 7:51-53)! These were strong words and applications that cost Stephen his life. We must be careful that we do not make the same mistake Stephen did-he should have stuck to a strict exegesis of the topic in point and left the conclusions to the court.

Conclusion

There is no controversy that men of God must "devote their time to an intense study of the word of God, and to stating in preaching and print what it actually says" (E. Fudge, Ibid). But as William Barclay puts it, "There is a time when the student and the saint must come down from the study or the cell to put what they have gained in private into practice in public." Teaching that looks to some place other than the need of man to get right with God, that ignores specific sin, or overlooks error is both useless and deceptive. The purpose of the teacher is to communicate truth that it might bring forth a change on the part of the listener. Anything less is a failure to make all men reflect the Lord, both within and without (Eph. 4:11-13).

Truth Magazine - April 24, 1974



Homosexuality

By Tom Moody

There was a lot of publicity a few years ago about studies indicating a "genetic predisposition" to homosexuality, but there has never been anything near proof that homosexuality cannot be helped and is genetic. If someone contends that it is genetically driven, the burden of proof is on the one making that contention. It cannot be proven. Some other thoughts:

1. Homosexuality is "conduct". We do not deny that someone may have homosexual thoughts or temptations. But what makes someone homosexual is committing homosexual acts.

Most people confuse a "tendency" or a "temptation" with the act. I may be tempted to rob a bank, but that does not make me a bank robber. I am a bank robber only when I rob the bank. I would not dispute that someone may have "homosexual tendencies." That does not mean that they have no choice but to commit homosexual acts. People choose the kind of behavior they engage in. Someone with the temptation to commit homosexual acts must discipline themselves and work to overcome their temptation just as someone tempted to commit heterosexual fornication or someone tempted to steal.

2. The fact that a condition has a genetic background does not make it good. The very same genetic studies that have been used to justify homosexuality also produced

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information about a number of genetic defects such as Down's syndrome. If there were a way to prevent or correct that genetic defect, we would do it. Should we be looking for a way to prevent or correct the "genetic defect" which supposedly causes homosexuality?

3. We know that there are "genetic predispositions" to certain behaviors. For ex-

ample, there is evidence of a genetic predisposition to alcoholism. If someone knows they have such a genetic predisposition, they would be wise to avoid the behavior (drinking alcoholic beverages) that can cause them a serious problem. Furthermore, they have that choice! That person is not forced to drink, or to become a drunkard. He may have "predisposition" to alcoholism, but whether he ever takes a drink is a matter of choice and behavior.

4. If the person with whom you are discussing has regard for the Bible, I would point out that passages such as 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 teach that homosexuals (as well as drunkards, thieves, adulterers and idolaters) learned to cease that behavior. If they could learn to cease it, it must have been something they originally learned to do. Nevertheless, whether it was learned or inherited behavior, they still could stop the behavior, and had to do so to be right with God.

