

Simple Solutions for Living in a Difficult World

As you observe the world we live in, it is anything but simple. It is very complex, and it is becoming more so every day. I have for the last three weeks been trying to get some new health insurance, and it has been a nightmare. All I want is a straightforward plan that easily tells me what it will and will not do, but that is not the case. Beth and I had one saleslady over to talk with us about her plan. When she left, I told Beth, "that's one of the most confusing things I have ever been through in my life." You would have to have a Ph.D. in insurance to understand all that was involved in that plan. If you want this on page 8, then you do away with your opportunities on page 5, and if you want this option, then do away with this other option. It is anything but simple. That is the way our modern world has become. If you try to call someone on a business line, you have to go through 10 options before you get the right person and then they're gone and you had to leave a voicemail.

In the midst of all the confusion we are faced with, all we really want is that life will work for us. What will make me happy in life? Will it be scuba diving, or will it be skydiving. Will having a dog help me to cope with life, or is it a cat that I need? The real issue is not whether we go scuba diving or skydiving. The real issue is the principles that we live our lives by. This is still God's world, and things only work as we do them his way, and His way is simple.

In 1665 the residents of London were dying by the thousands each day. The bubonic plague was spreading from house to house because of the unsanitary conditions. Rats and fleas spread the germs throughout the city. Almost 30,000 people died, almost a third of London's population at the time. This plague was so bad experts say the entire population of London would have died if it had not been checked. But on September 2, 1666, the Great Fire of London broke out and burned uncontrollably for five days. Most of the structures in Medieval London were wooden, and almost the entire city was reduced to ashes. But when the fire finally died, the people discovered many of the rats and fleas had been killed in the fire and the epidemic of the Black Death was halted. The fire cleaned the city of the impurity that was killing its people. The answer to a very complicated situation was very simple-sanitation. The interesting thing is the fact that rules the sanitation were in the book of Leviticus all-time. This is God's world, and he knows how things are supposed to function. The answers to the problems that we face in the complicated, high tech world that we live in are found in simple truths contained in the Scripture.

1. BELONG TO THE RIGHT FAMILY

You have probably heard it said that you can choose your friends but you can't choose your family. That is true only in the natural sense. In the spiritual sense, you can choose your family, and you have two options. The first family is headed by the first man Adam, and the second family is hated by the Savior Jesus Christ. *They are representative men.* Who you really are is determined, more than anything else, by which one of those 2 representative men you are related to.

a) THE FAMILY OF ADAM

Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned--

This verse takes us all the way back to the earliest days of human history, back to a place called Eden that was inhabited by just two people—Adam and Eve. In that ancient paradise, God created Adam to be the king over all creation.

God said to Adam and Eve, "All of it is yours. You can do whatever you want, with one exception. Don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you do, you'll die." You know the rest of the story. The Serpent tricked Eve into eating the forbidden fruit, and she gave some to Adam, and he sinned against God by eating it

Theologians call this event, "The Fall." When Adam sinned, he fell from a state of innocence into a state of guilt. He fell from God's favor to God's judgment. The point of this passage, however, is not how Adam's sin affected him, but how Adam's sin affected us.

In the Bible, Adam is what theologians call The Federal Head of the entire human race. When Adam crashed, we all crashed (He is the main-frame and we are the terminals, and when he crashed, the whole human system crashed with him).

Back in 1993 a man named Arthur Ashe died. He was a great tennis player, and he died by contracting AIDS through a blood transfusion during heart surgery almost 10 years before. Somehow some tainted blood was used during his surgery. He didn't know it. The doctors didn't know it, but when that blood was pumped into Arthur Ashe, it contained the deadly AIDS virus. After five years, the doctors discovered that he was HIV-positive. Nothing could be done about it. Eventually the disease took his life.

When Adam fell, he tainted the human bloodstream, and as *a result, every baby born into this world is tainted with the deadly sin virus*, and that sin virus keeps us from being like God intended us to be when He created us.

The human race has become like a train wreck. Let's say there is a train wreck, and we go out to see it. There, lying before us is mangled steel, and smoke and steam, and twisted cars laying in every direction. What we see was made by someone, and we recognize it as a train. But it is no longer in the form it was made to be. It has been wrecked. That's the way it is with us as human beings. We were originally made in the image of God, but there has been a train wreck. If you belong to Adam's family, your life is going to be a part of that train wreck.

Galatians 5:19-21 give us an illustration of how some of the wrecked pieces of human train looks. It says,

“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.”

When you look at that list, it is easy to see only the things that we would consider to be really bad. Such things as sexual immorality, idolatry and witchcraft seem to rise up off the page to the degree that we can excuse ourselves from the whole list. If you look more closely, you see things like discord, jealousy, fits of rage, dissensions, factions and envy. In fact there are more of these more respectable sense than there are the others. However you look at it, this is a train wreck. These are the kinds of things that separate people. These are the kinds of things that produce quarreling, gossip, prejudice and impure thinking, and they all are a result of being part of Adam's family.

b) THE FAMILY OF CHRIST

The upside of all of this is the fact that we have the privilege of switching families. Adam represented the whole human race, and what he did affected all of us. In His mercy, God allowed another representative man to come on the scene-Jesus Christ. Just as we all inherit death from Adam, we all can receive life through Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:21, “so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Because we are born as part of Adam's family, we are sinners, and we sin. But when we are born into God's family through faith in Jesus Christ, we began to reflect his lifestyle. I received in my e-mail inbox a link to a site that reunites high school friends. As I looked through that list, I recognized names of people that I had known and gone to school with so many years ago, I recognized that fact from what they were saying that they were no different really than they were in high school. The people who were liberal in their thinking in high school are liberal in their thinking today. As I examined my own life, I realize that I have had a drastic transformation. In high school, I did not read and study the Bible. I did not attend church regularly. Neither did I have any desire to bring

glory to God. Why is it that my life has changed so drastically where the lives of many others have not? The answer is simple. I have been born again into a new family-the family of God. You cannot even begin to live life in this world successfully until you've first of all chosen to belong to the family of the one who has created the world, and that is a choice that only you can make.

2. SOW THE RIGHT SEEDS

As important as belonging to the right family is, it is not the whole story. You must not only belong to the right family, you must follow that family's rules. Children get in to trouble when they do not follow the family's rules, and we get into trouble as spiritual beings when we do not follow our father's rules.

Galatians 6:7-9, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life."

Sowing to the flesh is following all the secular ideas of how to live life. Sowing to the Spirit is following the ways of God. And what ever you sow, you will reap.

For example, If you want more friends, sow the seed of friendliness (Proverbs 18:24).

Luke 6:37-38 declares this principle, *"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged"*. Judgment is the seed; being judged is the harvest.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you...."

Hos. 10:13 - But you have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil, ...

The "Sowing Reaping" principle always works and can't be avoided. Whatever is given always comes back.

John Smith was a loyal carpenter, working for a very successful building contractor who called him into his office one day and said, "John, I'm putting you in charge of the next house we build. I want you to order all the materials and oversee the whole job from the ground up."

John accepted the assignment with great enthusiasm and excitement. For ten days before ground was broken at the building site, John studied the blueprints. He checked every measurement, every specification. Suddenly he had a thought. "If I am really in charge," he said to himself, "why couldn't I cut a few corners, use less expensive materials, and put the extra money in my pocket? Who would know the difference? Once the house is painted, it will look just great."

So John set about his scheme. He ordered second-grade lumber, but his reports indicated that it was top-grade. He ordered inexpensive concrete for the foundation, put in cheap wiring, and cut every corner he could, yet he reported the purchase of much better materials. When the home was completed and fully painted, he asked the contractor to come and see it.

"John," said the contractor, "what a magnificent job you have done! You have been such a good and faithful carpenter all these years that I have decided to show my gratitude by giving you this house you have built, as a gift!"

Life is like that. Everyday, we are putting materials in life that are going to make us what we will be tomorrow.

"The Only Preparation for Tomorrow is the Right Use of Today"

2 Cor. 9:6 - Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

What is it in your life that you want an abundance in? If you want to become knowledgeable about the Bible, you must spend time sowing seeds by studying it. It will not come any other way. If you want to become intimate with God, you must spend time in prayer. Intimacy with God will not come unless you sow the seeds. Decide what is most important to you and to build quality time sowing seeds in that area because whatever you sow you will reap.

3. BE CONSISTENT

Psalm 106:3, "Blessed are they who maintain justice, who constantly do what is right."

Being consistent is a key to anything that you do in life. If you want to excel in some sport, the key is not how hard you are able to practice on one day or even one week. The key is that you practice consistently. The same is true with playing a musical instrument. Those who become good at their instrument or those who have a consistent routine of practice. Why would we think it would be any different in the Christian life?

I have seen many people begin living the Christian life, and I can tell you for sure that those who go on to become mature Christians are those who have developed consistent habits of life that lead to maturity. Those who flounder and never quite make it are those who are on and off. Sometimes they come to church, and sometimes they do not. Sometimes they read their Bibles and pray, and then there are those times when they do not. You might think that is pretty simplistic, and that is just the point. Living a life gracefully and successfully is not a complicated matter. It is the result of disciplining yourself to do the simple things God has commanded us to do in his word. And there is no way of getting around it because what you sow you will also reap.

FINAL THOUGHTS

- The problems that we face are often complicated. The answers are not. God is made them simple enough that a young child can understand and obey.
- Following the ways of this world is a natural thing to do. We are born with a nature that is inclined toward those things. God calls upon us to be born again and to do the supernatural.
- The choices that we make sometimes seem unimportant. The truth is that nothing could be any more important. Our choices determine our success or failure.
- Following God's ways often seems to not be enough. They are more than enough because they have the power of God behind them.

Imagine that there are two books that we can live our life by. The first book consists of directions on how to live life from a secular point of view. The second book tells us how to live life by God's laws. Each day you are living out of one of those books. In doing so you are determining the course of your life.