

5A ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIAN LIVING

AN ENGINEER'S THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIAN LIVING-1

(By Bill)

Significance

A believer understands that only God can save us and transform us. We can't even pray without help (Rom.8:26-27). Doesn't this diminish our significance?

On the contrary, we have incredible significance. We are loved by the Creator of the universe. Our prayers are heard by God and can change whole situations. Our choice affected our eternal destiny. Our actions influence the decisions and destinies of others.

On the contrary, humans have more significance in Christianity than in any other system:

- The God who created us knows every one of us (even the number of hairs on our head).
- We make real choices that impact ourselves and others.
- We can interact with God; we can choose to obey or disobey him.
- God doesn't intervene to stop us from sinning.
- God intervened in history to save us; the crucifixion temporarily split the Godhead.
- Our prayers can change the direction of history.
- We can influence people's eternal destiny.

TEST YOURSELF

An inventory checklist for Christian students based on I John

Do I...

- Walk in the light as Jesus is in the light? (1:7)
- Keep His commandments? (2:5)
- Walk just as He walked? (2:6)
- Love my Christian brothers? (2:10)
- Keep from loving the world? (2:15)
- Acknowledge that Jesus is the Messiah? (2:22)
- Retain what was heard from the beginning? (2:24)
- Do what is righteous? (2:29)
- Keep from a life of sin? (3:6, 9)
- Lay down my life for my brothers? (3:16)
- Show compassion by sharing my goods? (3:17)
- Have confidence before Him? (3:21)
- Discern truth from deception? (4:6)

- Confess that Jesus is the Son of God? (4:15)
- Remain in God's love? (4:16)
- Have the Son and His life? (5:12)
- Keep from idolatry? (5:21)

Obedience

Our obedient actions don't buy us heaven and can't even earn brownie points with the Lord.

They can-

- Glorify God
- Bless people
- Make us more like Christ
- Demonstrate God's love and character
- Help move people toward Christ
- Advance God's kingdom
- Show us abundant living

The Conscience

I picture the conscience as a little cube inside us with sharp corners. When you break God's commandments, it's supposed to spin around inside of you and cause you spiritual "pain." The more you continue to sin, however, the more the sharp corners get worn down, until sin doesn't bother us.

When you become a Christian you basically get a new, enlarged, improved conscience, a larger cube with sharper corners.

Faith and Love

"Faith" and "Love" are connected – Love is a decision you make, not a feeling you get that "happens to you," and over which you don't have any control. This concept has led to a huge increase of divorces in our society – from nearly "unheard of" when I was a kid, to over 50% presently. I can tell, sometimes, when a student who is doing well in class suddenly starts doing poorly, that his parents are going through a divorce; they think "we don't love each other any more." If you "fall" in love, then you can "fall out" as easily. Actually, real love is a decision that you make, not a feeling that you get. Watch "Fiddler on the Roof" for a good illustration of this change in definition. This change is destroying our society.

Other thoughts

- Only what's done in God's strength pleases Him.

- Any spiritual advance involves sacrifice (even if it's just our time).
- Don't reduce the Christian life to a set of rules, feelings, or patterns of magic words.
- Hold to a high standard, but don't manipulate by guilt.
- It's not realistic to expect non-Christians to bow before God, to keep from sin, or to love each other.
- Unlike cults, we're encouraged to think, to pray, to evaluate what we hear, and to analyze Scripture.
- We grow through trials and conflicts (James 1). Don't run from all these.
- Remember that we're at war against a powerful spiritual enemy who wants us to believe lies, distrust God, live in fear, and sin. Make use of all of God's armor (Ephesians 6).
- Many young Christians want to change immediately, instantly and completely, but that's not God's pattern. Israel had to conquer the land slowly and deliberately, step by step.
- We can either learn directly from Scripture or we can learn by experience, which is usually more painful.
- Jesus on earth lived fully dependent on the Father and the Holy Spirit. He had no unfair advantage. He didn't know some things. In His humanity He didn't have an infinite IQ. In that way He is also our model for life.
- Unlike the sins of a non-Christian, when a believer sins it will often become public.
- We want significance without responsibility, but significance is tied to responsibility.
- There are no mortal vs, venial sins in the Bible. All sin is destructive and separates us from God.
- "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt. 6:21) Sink your money into the Lord's work, and your heart will follow.
- God's communication to people involves (1) Creation (Romans 1), (2) Conscience (Romans 2), and (3) Commandments (Romans 3).
- There is a big difference between illogical and incomprehensible. I can't fully grasp the concept of the Trinity or Jesus as God-man, but there are not contrary to logic. Similarly, I can't really grasp Heisenberg uncertainty or the particle-wave duality of the electron.
- If God lives in us, there should be supernatural evidence in our lives.
- Every lesson we learn may be tested at some point.
- God often uses naïve, innocent people to expose the deceitfulness of powerful people.
- Many people's theology arises from their desires, rather than from Scripture.
- At any instant we may have a choice of sin or not sin (or, possibly good or better), but never will all possible choices be sinful.
- We never really sin alone. It always affects other people. Sometimes sinful choices (and cover-ups) affect our personality.
- Live for the long-run. Patience and faithfulness take a lifetime.
- Getting involved with people can be costly and painful-mentally, emotionally, and time-wise, but it is essential and what God wants.
- The Biblical Sabbath was a physical illustration of resting in Christ, not working for salvation (Hebrews 4).
- Jeroboam's alternative religious system (1 Kings 12) was probably the first cult.

- If you already know what to do, don't ask for a sign. (Gideon- Judges 6)
- Only what's done in Christ's strength (not our own) pleases God.
- If salvation is universal and automatic, if all are saved, then our choices have zero significance.
- Much of Old Testament history shows what people actually did and whether or not God liked it.
- Build your theology on parallel, not in series. Calvin and Wesley both can teach us about Christian living.
- Complaining is a sin. It means you don't like God's way of doing things. Note God's displeasure with complaining in Exodus and Numbers.
- Don't make any key decisions on the spur of the moment. Take time to think and pray about it. Count the cost. Run it through a few quiet times. Know the pros and cons up front so you aren't surprised later on.
- Just because you got what you wanted doesn't mean it was what God wanted.
- If something is spiritually worthwhile, expect opposition.
- Keep track of how you spend your time as well as how you spend your money. Aim to be a good steward of both.
- Sinning always lowers our dynamic threshold to temptation.
- Don't depend on your emotions. If your emotions are down some day, you may think that your relationship with God has tanked, too.
- We need to minister to our family before evangelizing the world (but do evangelize the world.)
- God is not impressed with numbers (attendance) like we are.
- Our basis for self-acceptance is that God made us in His image and loved us enough to send Christ.
- Don't allow yourself to be watered down and sidetracked.
- Some things won't make sense to non-Christians: praying to a God you don't see, doing things God wants you to do, serving and sacrificing for God, keeping from sin.
- Not only do our actions matter to God, but our motivations and attitudes also matter.
- You are supposed to be a light to the world, so stick your finger I the socket and stand there and glow.

AN ENGINEER'S THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIAN LIVING-2

(By Paul)

Purposes of Life

Among the purposes for human life we find these. The first three can be done by anyone. The others require God's work in our lives.

- Rule the earth.
- Work; do excellent work.
- Marry and have children.
- Become a forgiven child of God.
- Make Christ's salvation known.
- Worship God.
- Demonstrate God's love.
- Advance God's kingdom.
- Know God better.
- Grow in Christ-likeness.
- Bless the world.
- Impact the world through prayer.

In summary, we live to glorify God. As a result we make the world a better place through Christ.

How can we bless others?

- Praying for them
- Encouraging them
- Verbally blessing them
- Investing in them
- Helping to meet their needs
- Showing grace and mercy to them
- Sharing Scripture with them
- Using gifts and talents for them
- Helping them reach good goals
- Pointing them to Christ

Grace and Patience

God has always shown grace and patience-

- He removed Adam and Eve from Eden, but didn't destroy them.
- He would have spared Sodom for 10 righteous men.
- He sent two angels to Sodom for one last chance.
- He sent Joseph to Egypt.
- He gave 10 warnings to Egypt, 10 opportunities for Pharaoh to repent.
- He waited 430 years to destroy the Canaanites.
- He sent prophets to Israel over and over.
- He sent Jonah to Ninevah (They did repent for a while.)
- He sent Daniel to Babylon.

I must similarly learn to show grace and patience.

People who misunderstood

Jesus taught many transformative lessons through parables, often catching the listeners by surprise. It is essential that we ponder His parables to make sure we don't miss His points. Some clear examples in the parables of those who didn't get it:

Forgiveness – the parable of the forgiven servant (of a debt he could never begin to repay in his lifetime) who refused to forgive his fellow servant (Mt. 18:21-35).

Mercy – the parable of the elder brother of the returned prodigal –the rest of the story (Lk. 15:25-32).

Grace –the parable of the workers in the vineyard –everyone received the same pay, regardless of when they were hired (Mt. 20:1-16).

Loving non-Christians

It is essential that we avoid an “us vs. them” mentality.

On the one hand, once we come to Christ-

- Our lives are changed.
- We identify with Christ's people.
- We are to live like Christ.
- God calls us to be separate from sin.

On the other hand,

- We are still human, part of the common humanity.
- It is only by God's grace that we are renewed.
- We know our human failings and sins.
- We must be motivated by love.

We must learn how to live “in the world, but not of the world.”

Additional lessons I've been learning (or trying to learn)

- Every person is unique, but no one is an exception. The same standards apply to all, and we all need a Savior.
- We may ponder whether we are aliens or whether we actually exist, but no one (other than, perhaps, someone who is schizophrenic) really lives that way. We eat, we sleep, we work, and we look for significance. In short, we fit the Bible's description of humanity.
- We can imagine different universes, including ones in which evil does not exist, but this is the universe we live in.

- Knowing about God isn't the same as knowing God, but is a prerequisite for knowing God.
- Since God loves mankind immensely He must necessarily hate sin, since sin not only opposes His holiness but also destroys people.
- Life really isn't fair, but God continually extends grace, and His grace is better than fair.
- The amount of information available today is staggering, but God will give us enough information to allow us to keep from sin, head in the right direction, and relate to Him.
- I need to be satisfied with God, content with the circumstances He gives me, but not complacent about my sins or the evil in the world. I need to be "pressing on" (Phil.3) to know Christ better and to become more like Him.
- We're not supposed to be primarily conservatives or liberals but Kingdom people who see every decision from the vantage point of God's program and purpose for the world.
- The Christian life is intended to be a diode function- once you move through the diode (into God's kingdom) you can't go back.
- Since God reveals and dwells in truth I should continually seek truth, even if I don't like what I find.
- In general, God blesses obedience to His laws and principles. Even non-believers who follow God's morals are better off than those who don't. However, physical and material blessings are not the goal for the Christian—a deep relationship with God is His goal for us. Sometimes we may do everything right and still face a crisis so that we will seek Him and trust Him.
- I am commanded to speak the truth in love, not to choose one or the other. I need to soften bluntness while still being honest.