



TC's Thoughts for Discussion

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- > "Sometimes I lie awake at night, and I ask, 'Where have I gone wrong?' Then a voice says to me, 'This is going to take more than one night.'" —Charles M. Schulz

It took me a while to learn how to study the Bible as-if-no-one-had-ever-explained-what-it-means. That'll probably take some time for you, too. Why? For me, it had nothing at all to do with reading comprehension or even a capacity for cognitive reasoning. It had everything to do with love and respect for my Christian mentors, past and present. There is something about our Human Nature that causes us to want to trust others, especially those who appear to be genuine and sincere. In following through on that natural tendency, we inevitably accept the "filters" through which those others have come to perceive the human experience—and man's relationship to God.

I was a preacher's kid. My dad was ordained by a large, mainstream Christian denomination. My grandfather was one of three clergymen who founded yet another large, mainstream Christian denomination. Because I loved and respected them both, I gained much eternal value from them both. But was my trust in them and in other like-minded "men of God" too complete?

Here's what Samuel Clements (a.k.a. Mark Twain) said about that:

- > "In religion and politics, people's beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at second hand, and without examination."

This is what God has to say about it:

- > "Thus saith the Lord; 'Cursed be the man that trusteth in man...'" —Jeremiah 17:5

It was after I had retired from a rewarding secular career that a critical fact finally registered with me: "Human Nature is the Sin Nature." I was shocked...and embarrassed! For Christian believers and every other human being, "doing what comes naturally" comes all too naturally. Because human nature is the Sin nature, Christians are instructed in God's written word to crucify it. Remember? What comes naturally for us is captured in a well-intended, but dangerously misguided religious cliché, "Follow your heart." The Old Testament is clearly a record of God's effort to teach the Hebrews why and how to THINK rationally—to use their minds, instead of their hearts, for making choices:

- > "The heart [is] deceitful above all [things] and desperately wicked: who can know it?" —Jeremiah 17:9

In a nutshell, God's entire Old Testament message is justly characterized like this: "Okay, these are the boundaries for your behavior. Stay within these boundaries to enjoy my blessings and my protection. Step one foot outside these boundaries and you're on your own. Step back inside with plans to stay and you can, again, enjoy my blessings and my protection." The Gospels record Jesus' modeling of – and confirmation of – that mindset for us: He never once permitted his feelings to interfere with his thinking. Want to be like Jesus? That's how: Use your MIND for sound reasoning. Reserve your HEART for love and compassion:

- > "Let this MIND be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." —Paul, at Philippians 2:5
- > "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your MIND..." —Paul, at Romans 12:2
- > "God's gift of a sound MIND is a terrible thing to waste."

Neither my parents, nor my grandparents, nor any of my pastors or other religious mentors intentionally imposed the "filters" on me that been imposed on them by others whom they had loved and respected. But in defaulting, albeit sincerely, to a given "what 'we' believe" franchise, they effectively restricted my ability to comprehend what God's written word really says...until I finally grew up and started learning how to exercise personal accountability for gaining the original truth.

Every church/denomination owns a "What 'We' Believe" franchise. All seminaries teach it, their graduates preach it and those who warm their pews buy it. Let the buyer beware.

—T. C. Newsome 

I was a successful Bible teacher for a LOT of years—big sanctuary classes.

I knew what my denomination believed and that's what I taught.

Yes, I should've checked it out to make sure it was true.

So why didn't I do that? Well, maybe I didn't do that for the same reason that you haven't really checked out what your denomination teaches.
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