

Identity Wars Study 15 – How Do You Read?

What is it about different cultures that makes certain practices acceptable in one country but not another? Can you think of any 'bad' customs which are normal in another country or culture?

If you 'google' bad manners when eating, you may learn some very interesting things.

- Consider slurping and burping when eating. What about talking with your mouth half full of food? What about eating rats, dogs and cats? Touching someone's head (Thailand cannot do)
- Is it just culture that makes something right or wrong?

It is amazing how the same actions can be interpreted in completely different ways depending on which culture or world-view you are from?

- This fact is no different when we look at the two different cultures of kingdoms of God and Satan

What is the foundation of the Christian faith? Why are there so many variants when it comes to Christian practice; so many different denominations with contradicting beliefs?

The journey into the kingdom of God involves a transfer of culture and world-view as we learn to think in ways foreign to our earthly culture and world-view. Why do you think this would be difficult?

Is it possible that the way we approach the Bible will impact what we get out of it? How?

With a performance based world-view we will approach our reading and understanding of God's word with a performance mindset. What would be the result of this?

- Performance based religion rather than gratitude of the gift to ensure the relationship:
"For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2: 8-9)

Consider the rich young ruler. How did he approach religion? Matthew 19:16-22

The greatest difficulties of the Christian walk revolve around how we approach the Bible.

- Coming out of a world where performance, achievement and position are rewarded, it is easy to think that God's kingdom operates in the same way. The fact is, it doesn't!
- As we read the Bible, we need to surrender our opinions of interpretation to the Spirit of God so we will learn His thinking and His ways. Isaiah 55:8

The contradictions, heresies, and contentions permeating the Christian church come directly from approaching the reading and study of the Bible with an incorrect framework.

- It can only be expected that, if we approach the reading of the word of God with an incorrect mindset, we will come to wrong conclusions.
- A performance approach (to make myself "greater") will always give us a different outcome to a relational approach.
- The two kingdoms of this world have nothing in common, so to approach God's word with Satan's kingdom approach will lead to error and a surprising (tragic) destiny, both in this world and the world to come.

Jesus again dealt with this issue in Luke 10:25, 26.

Notice carefully that Jesus did not ask '*what*' do you read; He asked '*how*' do you read?

What does this question, *how do you read*, mean to you?

What is your approach or strategy when reading? Performance goals or relational goals?

The issue of eternal life is central to the Christian walk. Salvation is the goal of the walk with Christ, but what is the way to achieve that goal? How do we gain salvation?

- Is it by performing well enough to earn heaven? Or is it through a relational experience that will result in knowing and loving God, and thus attaining eternal life?
- Jesus answered this Himself when He prayed. John 17:3 (Eternal life is to know You...)

The difference in the two approaches are clearly seen when considered in the context of keeping the commandments of God.

- Do we keep the commandments to persuade God to save us? Or do we keep them because God has demonstrated His love to us and we desire to respond to our Heavenly Father's love?
The difference is immense.

The lawyer and the rich young ruler both approached the law of God in a legal sense.

- One wanted to know how to technically define who he should help, the other wanted to keep the letter of the law without it impacting his relationship with others.
- In both cases Jesus taught that commandment keeping could not be separated from relationships: either with God or with others.
- In short, God's love in our hearts will inspire us to do good to others, which, at the end of the day, is the fulfilling of the law.

Do all Christians believe in living according to the Ten Commandments?

There are many Christians, in fact the majority, who do not believe the Ten Commandments apply to them since Jesus died for their sins.

- They believe it is impossible for man to keep the law of God and therefore misrepresent the relationship they are invited to enter into (makes the Father look harsh for requiring too much).
- The joy of victory never becomes their privilege to experience.

Whether through the legalistic works of the law or through the rejection of the law by discarding it, both groups fail to attain God's ideal for their life – victory in Jesus.

- This lack of a victorious relationship will result in the failure to enter the kingdom of heaven.

In Matthew 7:21-23 we found a large group of professed Christians claiming the right to eternal life based on their good works. They had done many good things for the Lord.

- Sadly Jesus had to reject them based on the fact they had no relationship with Him.
- Jesus, therefore, went on to explain how important it is to build your Christian experience on a relationship with Him. Matthew 7:24-27, 28-29

The danger in believing in a God that has no power to work in your life (Philippians 2:13), is that you may soon believe He didn't have the power to create in six literal days, thus making the fourth commandment regarding the Sabbath non-applicable to you..

- When we start interpreting or twisting the Scriptures to suit ourselves, we leave ourselves open to all types of error. The list of errors in the churches is long. (we should see first if what God says makes sense, even if it goes against what human "experts" say) – William Miller's Rules
- It is vital, therefore, to interpret the Scriptures according to the principles of God's kingdom – relationally, and not according to the kingdom from whence we came. How do you read?