

January 1, 2012

## Gleanings

### A New Way of Living

Ever wonder what a deceased person might want to say to those still living? A deceased person has gone on a journey we all will take, so he or she could provide some valuable wisdom about how to prepare for the afterlife.



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Consider the story of a man who was physically rich and Lazarus who was physically poor (Luke 16:19—31). The rich man lived a narcissistic life of ease and comfort. In contrast Lazarus lived in poverty and suffering. In the parable both die—the rich man goes to hell and Lazarus goes to Abraham’s side. (Since Abraham is the father of those who walk by faith in God (Romans 4:16), this suggests that Lazarus was a man of faith.) In hell the rich man realized the error of his ways and wanted to warn his brothers so that they would repent. Abraham responded that the living have adequate revelation through Scripture about how to live in accordance with the will and ways of God. (The term “will of God” refers to God’s plan and purpose for history—the meta-narrative. The term “ways of God” refers to the means and methods by which a person obeys God’s will, which is tantamount to living according to a biblical worldview.)

One possible conclusion to this story is that the dead cannot warn the living. But would this be correct? Consider the testimony of Scripture.

By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. Hebrews 11:4 [NIV]

Abel’s righteous living as a sheep herder emanated from his faith in God. Based on the revelation that he had, he lived according to the will and ways of God. Consequently, Abel speaks to all generations. His life is multi-generational.

Sadly there seem to be few who really want to have a multi-generational testimony. Today’s focus is narcissistic. Most people seem to be striving to live a life of ease and comfort, like the rich man in the above parable.

One example of a rich man is given in a recent article titled “Americans: Undecided about God?” [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/11/opinion/sunday/americans-and-god.html?src=ISMR\\_AP\\_LO\\_MST\\_FB](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/11/opinion/sunday/americans-and-god.html?src=ISMR_AP_LO_MST_FB)

In this article, the writer reveals that he is a self-defined modernist, humanist, postmodernist, empiricist, and pragmatist. He calls himself a rationalist, which is the same as a modernist. He defines his own view of God, which he states is a private matter. He chooses his own definition of what is “good,” which is humanistic. He doesn’t believe in absolute truth, which is postmodern. And based on what he views as “good,” he adopts empirically derived practices to facilitate his definition of “good,” which is pragmatic.

He claims to be on a self-defined quest for God. But his search for God is a ruse; it is a cover for his rebellion against God. Anyone who seeks to define God is an idolater, because God is not defined by man. Rather God defines himself and man—the genesis and definer of everything is God.

Sadly, this writer is typical of many today, even many who profess Christ. There is no genuine effort to seek God and therefore no genuine effort to discover the purpose of God for their lives.

The common definition of success is living a life of comfort and pleasure. If we have what we need to live the way we want to live, we view life as successful. This, however, will lead to an empty, unfulfilled, and vain life.

One of the advantages of aging is the opportunity to observe reality over time. In my more than fifty years of involvement in the Christian community, I have been in several streams—denominational, Bible church, and charismatic. Though each stream is somewhat different, there is a commonality. The people in all three streams define life as did the rich man in the above parable. My observation is that most professing Christians perform their religious activities seeking to please God so that he will bless their effort to live lives of ease and comfort, that is, live according to their will and ways.

But “without faith, it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6). To live by faith does not mean to live

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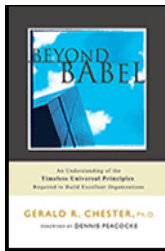
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according to our own will and ways, but to live according to God's will and ways.

Abel lived consistent with the revelation he received from God; that is, he lived by faith in God and God's revelation. By faith, Abel connected his work to his worship consistent with the will and ways of God. Because Abel lived by faith, the message of his life became a multi-generational testimony.

When there is confusion about God's identity and therefore his nature, there is confusion about how to live. If a person's life is not anchored in Christ, and therefore in Scripture, then the person will live seeking his or her own will and ways.

If you want to make your life to count multi-generationally, you must die to your will and ways so that you can live according to God's will and ways as revealed in Scripture. One of the measures of how well you do this is the degree to which you connect your worship and work.

God's will is expressed in his meta-narrative—his overarching plan and purpose for the universe (Ephesians 1:11). He works everything, even evil, to accomplish his will (Proverbs 16:4). Our responsibility is to discover our roles in his meta-narrative (Ephesians 2:10). We are then to play our roles according to a biblical worldview, which means according to the ways of God.

A person who chooses God's will and ways will be committed to a life of faith in Christ marked by finding and fulfilling his or her divinely ordained life purpose according to a biblical worldview. Such a person should not expect a life of ease and comfort. Abel's life of faith was marked by death at the hands of a jealous religious brother who sought to live according to his own will and ways.

Jesus stated that it costs to be his disciple—it costs everything (Luke 14:33). This means that true disciples of Jesus no longer live for comfort and pleasure, but rather as sacrificial servants of God committed solely to doing God's will according to God's ways. Jesus and Abel lived this way. Their lives were marked more by suffering than by ease and comfort. A true disciple can expect to be treated as Jesus and Abel were—misunderstood, maligned, minimized, and murdered.

But there are many rewards for being a disciple of Jesus Christ. One of the great rewards is that the life of a true disciple becomes a multi-generational testimony like Abel's because when true disciples die their message continues to live.

If you want to make a difference in life, you must touch future generations. Therefore you must commit to a life of faith in God, which means living according to the will and ways of God. You must build your life on Christ as revealed in Scripture and live based on a biblical worldview. You must engage in the quest to find and fulfill God's purpose for your life.

May the Lord grant you grace for the journey so that what was said of Abel can be said of you: "And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead" (Hebrews 11:4).

May I suggest a new way of living—a New Year's resolution? Be willing to sacrifice a life of ease and comfort based on doing your will according to your ways. Instead, commit to learning and living according to God's will and ways. If you don't know how to do it, find someone who does and allow them to disciple you. May this New Year be the time that you step up to living as Abel did so that your obedience to God's will and ways will be a multi-generational testimony in God's meta-narrative. In the end, this is all that will count.

Happy New Year!

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	<a href="#">Seminar</a> : Strategic Life Alignment Alumni Event	<a href="#">March 4, 2012 (Singapore)</a>
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