

Lack of honor, why society is falling apart #1, Handshakes and donuts

Hi all,

"You don't want to give someone a limp hand like a dead fish. A handshake is like a hug at arm's length. Firm up your hand. You want to tense the muscles in your hand, and grasp theirs like a good hug. That's better, you've got it. Now look me in the eye. When you shake hands you always look them in the eye."

That is an example of a lesson from my father when I was about 7 or 8 years old. I remember those lessons like it was yesterday. They included eating while sitting upright, one hand on lap, one hand to eat with, and many such things.

Lessons included shining shoes because a good shine on the shoe and a firm handshake will be the first impressions someone has of you. Always return something borrowed or rented in better shape than what you received it. When camping always leave a camp site neater and in better shape than when you got there - pick up the trash of others, even if just one piece, and throw it away with your trash.

The 10...Commandments, or Suggestions...?

What my dad was teaching me was respect, honor, integrity. He didn't always put those labels on his lessons, but he knew what he was doing. With those lessons now a part of who I was, on my first date with Barb, when she was 15 and I was 16, she later reflected how I was different than the other boys she had been on dates with. Including that I opened the car door and other doors for her, was polite and considerate. (Yes, I still open car and other doors for her)

But I really think our mutual fates were sealed when I asked after the movie, "Would you like to stop for a donut?" I spent the last of my money on that little impromptu stop at Dunkin Donuts. But even that stop was grounded in what my dad taught me about consideration, respect, honor - in this case doing something nice for my new girl friend just because I thought she'd like it. That gesture was one of honor and respect, and consideration.

In Exodus 20 God gives Moses the 10 Commandments, which are divided into the first 4 which are vertical, pertaining to God, and the last 6 are horizontal, pertaining to man.

The first 4 are traced directly to the first command: Have no other gods before me, you shall not make any idol, you will not use My Name in a vain way, you will take a day of rest. These 4 are summed up in 'You will have no gods but Me'.

The remaining 6 are summed up with the first one of the group: Honor your father and mother. The rest flow from and can be traced back to honoring your father and mother, for to honor mom and dad is to NOT do the following: You will not murder, you will not commit adultery, you will not steal, you will not lie, you will not lust (improper desire for things or persons).

These were later summarized as Jesus stated in Mark 12: 29-31: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind and strength, and the second is this; Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these."

Steps away from honor

Today we see in the US and all over the world, a basic lack of honor, respect, and value. Human life is not valued as it once was, neither are national leaders, and in the US, dishonoring the flag has become a national debate. Again in the US, which seems (sadly) to lead world pop culture in all that is ungodly, we have athletes refusing invitations to be honored at the White House because they don't like the President, athletes making rude comments about the President, his wife and family.

Actors and business leaders saying and being rude to the President and Presidency. In the US we even have States and cities refusing to honor federal law because they don't agree with it - you name it, if it is a law, a person in authority, a long-standing institution, tradition, or societal norm, it is under attack. Even if a Governor, Mayor, or citizen doesn't agree with a law, it becomes acceptable to let the world know and in turn attack that law, or office or person.

What starts a person or nation down the path to losing all sense of honor and respect?

Romans 1: 21 and 28 outline the first steps away from knowing honor and respect:

"For even though they knew God (as Creator) they did not honor Him as God, neither did they give thanks for his wondrous creation." (Amplified Version) v21

"They knew all the time there is a God, yet they refused to acknowledge Him as such, or to thank Him for what He is and does." (J. B. Phillips translation). v21

"And just as they did not seem fit to acknowledge God or consider Him worth knowing (as their Creator), God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do things that are improper and repulsive." (Amplified Version) v28

"Moreover, since they considered themselves too high and mighty to acknowledge God, He allowed them to become the slaves to their degenerate minds, and to perform unmentionable deeds." (J.B. Phillips translation) v28

The first step towards no respect for human life, no respect for authority or moral and societal norms, is to refuse to acknowledge God as God. Once a person does that they are saying they don't want His influence in their lives, so He gives them what they want - thoughts apart from His influence. It was their choice, all He is doing is letting them have what they want.

Once such a person is turned over by their choice to think thoughts separate from any influence by God, you have a person walking a path to their own destruction. Soon we have families falling apart, society, and eventually, the disregard for living according to law based on strong moral foundations.

Next week more about the process of not wanting to retain God in their knowledge....until then, to the donuts!

Blessings,
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Lack of honor, why society is falling apart #2, Tzit-tzit and politeness.

Hi all,

He was only trying to find some privacy to relieve himself as he entered the cave. He had no idea that in that cave were as many as 3,000 soldiers, all of whom wanted him dead.

King Saul was chasing David, and we are told David had 3,000 men who were hiding in the cave as King Saul pursued them. Not knowing where David was hiding, King Saul just happened to choose THAT cave in which to relieve himself, and David's men thought the Lord had brought Saul into the cave so they could kill him.

Prompted by their urgings, we are told in I Samuel 24:1-8: "Then David arose and cut off the skirt (hem) of Saul's robe secretly. And it came to pass afterward that David's heart convicted him. He said to his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord. So David stopped his men with these words, and didn't allow them to rise against Saul."

Honor, Tzit-tzit

I shared last week that when a person does not like to retain God in their knowledge, God follows their free will decision to reject Him, and turns them over to have thoughts completely void of anything God. After all, that is what they wanted. They didn't want to acknowledge Him as God, so He backs completely away to let them experience what they want.

That is the essence of the kingdom of hell, to be able to have a life completely void of anything God - and due to free will, God prepared such a place for angels (who made their decision at Lucifer's rebellion) and people who don't want Him - that is love and grace to do so.

The New Testament teaches every person alive on the earth today is a citizen of one kingdom or the other* - heaven or hell. Angels have already made their choice, humans are in the process of choosing. One kingdom is ruled by a cruel king, the other by the King of Kings. But all are citizens of the kingdom they chose by free will. (*Colossians 1:13, Acts 26:18, etc)

When a person decides they don't want to "retain God in their knowledge", they lose the fear of God and therefore the value of human life. This is because we are made in the image and likeness of the God whom they rejected, so the value of life plummets in value in their eyes.

King David was anointed by the prophet Samuel to succeed King Saul. Though he knew his destiny in the Lord, in practical terms Saul was still alive and on the throne. David recognized God alone retained the authority to remove Saul and orchestrate his eventual death. Human life had value to David, though Saul was evil. But David knew God is God and the One to whom he was accountable. People who don't want God, become angry and devalue human life.

Numbers 15:37-39 is where God commanded Israel to make tassels on their clothing that included a strand of blue (stands for heaven). Today with modern clothing styles this is seen mostly in Hebrew Prayer Shawls, but from Moses through the time of David to the first century with Jesus, all garments of every Jew had these tassels, known in Hebrew as 'tzit-tzit', or tzitzit. (This is what the woman with the hemorrhaging condition touched on Jesus' clothes in Mark 5).

Here is the briefest of summaries for those interested because the full history is so detailed.

God told Moses that the tassels represented the Word of God, and that when they saw them they would think of all God's commands, and remind themselves to keep from sin. Hebrew letters also represent numbers (Like A = 1, B = 2, C = 3), and they were tied in such a way and with knots that totaled 613, which is the number accepted for centuries by Rabbi's as the number of the laws of Moses.

Two sets of strands are knotted together 2x, and then the longer strand (shamash) is wound around 7 strands, and then 2 sets are knotted 2x. They repeat this 3x, for a total of 5 knots, and when all is said and done the number is 39 knots. The number 39 is important because with each Hebrew letter also representing a number, the number 39 says in Hebrew "The Lord is One". And because each 5-knotted tassel has 8 threads when doubled over, for a total of 13, the total sum is 613. The very word 'tzitzit' is the Hebrew number 600. When you add the 13 plus the 600 you get 613. Complicated isn't it?

There is argument among Rabbi's about the number going back centuries. Rabbi Rashi from 1100 AD agrees with 613, but Moses ben Nahman (also known as Nachmanides) who lived in 1200 AD, says the number is 603 and not 613...but generally Rabbi's for centuries have accepted 613 laws of Moses, and following God's command, made (39) tassels with knots that add up to 613, and also meaning "The Lord is One". So that is what Saul was wearing, and what David cut off.

What does that mean for David? The custom of the day up to and including our day among the Orthodox, is to cut the tassels from the garment off at a person's funeral. This signifies that being dead, they are now free from the bounds of the earth and God's Law. David performed this funeral ceremony on King Saul, telling him he was a dead man.

For this his heart convicted him, as we see in his statements that he repented and would not lift up his hand against the Lord's anointed king. David demonstrated such honor and grace in that moment. He could have killed Saul and briefly wanted to. He had that momentary failure, killing Saul in his heart and to tell him he was a dead man, but then he repented, stating it is the Lord's responsibility not his, to determine when Saul's reign would end.

When a person does not want to retain God in their knowledge, and the Lord gives them what they want, to think all sorts of thoughts that are void of anything related to God, the first thing that happens is the loss of respect for the authority of ruler (Kings, Presidents, Prime Ministers, Monarchs). In the NT we are told to pray for these people - but they rejected God and therefore God's authority, so the next in line is man's authority, as man was made in the image and likeness of God.

Next week, the sorts of thoughts one has when not wanting to retain God in their knowledge. Until then, blessings,
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Lack of honor, why society is falling apart #3, What they are thinking

Hi all,
Revelation 11:18 tells us "the nations were angry", and as time marches on towards the eventual return of Jesus, we will see anger growing as a main element of society, and even as it says, whole nations.

Also remember Matthew 24:12, which says "Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will turn cold."

Jesus chose very specific words in this verse, and it reads like something from our modern news. The Greek word 'lawlessness' is 'anomia', from 'anomos', which is where we get 'animosity', and THAT means 'a disregard for proper authority', resentment, anger. Animosity will abound - that disregard for law (and anger towards) traditions will abound, causing the love of people to turn cold.

The word Jesus used for 'love' is 'agape', unconditional love, and the word used for 'turn cold', means 'to blow across to cool', describing how one might blow across their bowl of hot soup or hot cup of coffee to cool it down a bit.

That is the process Jesus said would happen in the last days. Because animosity would abound, a disregard for authority (laws, traditions, customs), the unconditional love of many will gradually be cooled, as one blowing across something hot. It describes a gradual process of the winds of animosity blowing across peoples' love to cool that love.

That means those that walk with God will stand out as people of love, and that distinction between those who love and those whose love has turned cold, will become increasingly obvious. They will know us by our love!

'Agape' is unconditional love, and part of the quality of unconditional love includes making allowances for one another, patience, kindness, gentleness, the desire to 'take the high road' as we say, which means that though you could retaliate you choose to remain quiet and just do the right thing - that quality in the people and nations, will gradually disappear in the same way blowing across a bowl of hot soup gradually cools it. But our love will increase in our hearts, causing us to become obvious to those around us - simply because our love has not cooled off. Amazing...

We started with Romans 1:21 and 28

These verses tell us there are people who do not want to retain God in their knowledge, that they don't want to acknowledge Him as God (Creator), so because they don't want Him, He releases them to think all sorts of thoughts that are completely lacking in anything God. That is what they wanted, so He must, due to free will, honor them.

Let us read the kinds of thoughts a person has who has rejected God in their knowledge, for again, it reads like the headlines of a news report, or the content of a movie or TV show. Romans 1:28-31:

"And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God or consider Him worth knowing (as their Creator), God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do things which are improper and repulsive, until they were filled (permeated, saturated) with every kind of unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, and mean-spiritedness."

"They are gossips, (spreading rumors), slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors (of new forms) of evil, disobedient and disrespectful to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful (without pity)." (Amplified Version)

There are a total of 23 vices listed in the Greek, too many to go into in detail here. However, a few of the words are worth looking at in more detail for our little study, for they describe perfectly what we see in so many people today.

First, they reject the idea of God, and that God is Creator. (evolution) The word 'depraved' in 'depraved mind' in Greek is 'adokimon' meaning literally 'Not standing the test'. It is a startling statement, meaning literally that "**Man has tested God and disapproved of Him.**" To say it another way, "They have in their mind tested God, and rejected Him."

Other descriptions include:

Once a person tests God in their mind and disapproves of Him, they start thinking thoughts absent of anything that is God:

'..things which are improper and repulsive' is 'kathekonta' which comes from 'kata', a 'bad', and 'heko', which means 'to be in the present'. So it means that doing things improper and repulsive isn't just something they do, it is **their very presence brings bad with them.** Wherever they are, it is bad.

Other descriptors are 'gossip' which in Greek implies secrecy and cliques, like high school groups only including people like them in their group: The cheerleaders, the athletes, the geeks, the nerds, the 'rough crowd', and so on. Each like a secret little group not allowing others in. That is the meaning behind 'gossip' here. That is a mark of the ungodly, divisiveness.

Also, 'slanderers' which is open lies about a person coupled with accusation. 'Insolent' is the Greek word 'hubrizo' where we get hubris, meaning excessive pride and arrogance. 'Boastful' comes from 'alazonas' which means wandering around and carries with it the idea of wandering pretenders, braggarts focused on self and how life is all about them. Narcissists.

I should note that verse 31, "...without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful" would be better understood as the Revised Standard Version translates it which is literal: "**...foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.**"

If that doesn't describe many people today I don't know what does, and it explains how they became the way they are.

The purpose of the 3 part study has been to provide insight into what is happening to society, and why the bad seem to be getting so much more bad, and some in the body of Christ itself seems to be separating into those who are the remnant, the core, the balanced ones truly walking with the Lord, and those who are off-balance, focused on things which divide rather than unite. As seen above, as the love of many turns cold, our love will abound, creating a noticeable distinction between unbelievers and believers - our love only increases as we grow in Christ, while others around us see their love grow cold.

If I may paraphrase something my friend Steve observed: Unity of the faith doesn't mean we all agree on everything, it means we are mature enough to lay aside the things which would separate us, in order to focus on Who we have in common, the Lord Jesus.

No more sitting on the fence post people, undecided about where we stand with God. Focus on love, and increasing that love of God and man!

Next weeks, the chronological order of the week leading up to the cross and resurrection, and why. Until then, blessings,

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