

Difference Between Theoretical and Personal - Sunday AM 03/22/20

Introduction:

A few weeks ago, the Coronavirus or COVID 19 was something that didn't mean a lot to most of us. We knew something about China having a lot of deaths and shutting down major cities but that was on the other side of the world. But now our country, our lives, and our families have been affected. Even the worship of numerous congregations has been changed. Some congregations have cancelled all their services for an indefinite time, others have gone to one service per week, others are meeting with what amounts to a statement telling members who are sick or afraid to come to stay at home.

One statement that stuck with me is somebody saying they never had to deal with something like this before. Elders have to make decisions that will impact their congregations for the near and not so near future. It is one thing to say "we will never close our doors due to the government and another when the state governor says churches should not meet due to the spread of the virus. We can answer hypotheticals all we want but when it becomes personal then it takes on a different tone. I mean it was one thing to watch people in Italy on their balconies singing and pictures of people putting up Christmas lights to bring cheer but another to understand their loneliness.

I thought of this yesterday, March 19th, as we flew from Phoenix to Louisville. On the flight out to Phoenix, I noticed the flight attendants not walking the aisles as much and basically keeping their distance. On the way back to Louisville they told us they were only going to give us a can of water and a snack. Otherwise, they literally stayed away from us.

Then we video chatted with our youngest daughter Noah. Due to the health risk to younger people (about 40% of those admitted to hospital are under 59 years of age), she and our grandson, Tommy, were self-quarantining. Knowing the answer but still I asked if that meant Regena and I needed to stay away. To which she said, yes! At that point the idea of social distancing and quarantining went from hypothetical to person.

I) **It Is easier to deal with the Theoretical than the personal.**

A) **Theoretical**

1. We can give an answer without any personal involvement.
2. Does not require any personal sacrifice.

B) **Personal**

1. Means we go from the mental acknowledgement of something being right or something we should do, to personal involvement.
 - a. Example: **James 1:27** *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*
 - b. We can acknowledge our responsibility to help others but then not do anything whereas personal says “I really need to visit them, to mow their yard, to take them to the doctor’s office.
2. Personal sacrifice is part of personal involvement.

- a. **James 2:15** *If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?*
- b. Faith is individual in nature and requires personal involvement.

II) Jesus Did not just deal with the Theoretical but the Personal

A) A lot of questions asked of Jesus were theoretical in nature.

1. Who is my neighbor? **Luke 10:29** *But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*
2. The context: **Luke 10:25** *And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" 27 So he answered and said, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'" 28 And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."*
3. The parable of the Good Samaritan.

Luke 10:30 *Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31*

"Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 "Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. 33 "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 "So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 "On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' 36 "So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" 37 And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

3. It was one thing to answer the question it was another to make the personal application.
4. It is one thing to say everyone is my neighbor it is another to treat everyone as your neighbor.

B) Answering the question about Jesus' authority.

1. **Luke 20:2** and spoke to Him, saying, "Tell us, by what authority are You doing these things? Or who is he who gave You this authority?" 3 But He answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, and answer Me: 4 "The baptism of John--was it from heaven or from men?" 5 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did

you not believe him?' 6 "But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet." 7 So they answered that they did not know where it was from. 8 And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

2. Jesus did not side step the question or just trick them into answering Him, He placed them in the position of saying what they believed.
3. One thing to say what others, or someone else believes, it is another to say what I believe.

III) Let's Make Some Personal Application

A) Our sins against God are not hypothetical sins but they are "real sins."

1. They are not committed by somebody or society in general but by us as individuals.
 - a. *You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice". (Exodus 23:2)*
 - b. The sins I need to worry about are my sins.
2. My violation of God's law.

B) The Bible speaks of the judgement to come and we can talk about the "Judgement Day"

1. *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the*

body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10)

2. Society will not be there to plea my case, nor my preacher, or my elders, or my family.

C) We can talk about spending eternity in heaven or hell in non-personal terms but the fact is we as individuals will either suffer for eternity or be with God.

1. *“But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness.” (Matthew 8:12)*
2. Hell and heaven are real places.
3. Real people will be there.
4. The weeping and gnashing of teeth will be our tears and our anguish if we go to hell.
5. Just as the joy of heaven will be real.
6. *“Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.” (Matthew 25:21)*

D) The sacrifice of Jesus

1. We can study about Jesus leaving heaven to come to earth, the shameful treatment he received, and his painful death on the cross in purely hypothetical and clinical terms.
2. *When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed*

the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!" (Matthew 27:29)

3. When we can hear the words of scorn, see the blood dripping from Jesus' head, and the nails being driven in into his hands it becomes personal.
4. It is personal because he died for me! Yes, he died for all of us, Jew, Gentile, Greek, Barbarian, rich, poor, etc. But he died for me!

E) Our hearing the Gospel must go from the hypothetical to the personal.

1. I know a lot of folks who can speak of the plan of salvation and how one is saved by the blood of Christ and yet never obey the Gospel. Why? There are many reasons but I have to think, one reason is it never becomes personal.
2. The Philippian jailer understood this. *"And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30)*
3. It is my soul, my eternal destiny, and my obedience that is necessary for me to go to heaven. The same goes for each of us.