

“Why We Have ‘Issues’”

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Understanding A Gospel-Driven Christian Life

Read: Exodus 20:1-6

God made humanity in “his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). Because of this they reflect His character and carry out His design (Gen. 1:26). God created humanity with need and dependency. He never intended for them to live independent of Him. In fact, they were created so that they would only feel fulfilled, completed and at rest as they find this in Him. All that we are as immaterial and material beings are met in all that He is. It is for this reason you have the following declaration (Exod. 20:1-6).

¹“Then God spoke all these words, saying, ²‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³You shall have no other gods before Me. ⁴You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶but showing loving-kindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments’” (Exod. 20:1-6).

Although this speaks to the commandments given to the nation of Israel on Mount Sinai, its weight is found in why it was given. Humanity’s ultimate joy is sourced solely in who God is and what He does. He knows because of design that His creation cannot be “happy” any other way other than in Him. This is what God designed us to be. Nothing else works apart from Him. Life is broken unless it is properly fitted to God. Listen to how Sarah Young captures this thought.

“I designed you to depend on Me moment by moment, recognizing that *apart from Me you can do nothing.*” ([emphasis hers] Sarah Young, *Jesus Calling*, 108 [April 13]).

God designed us to have meaning and significance only as we are aligned with Him. The idea of community and communion exists within the Trinity. **There is no concept of God apart from a Trinity and there is no humanity apart from God.** St. Augustine speaks to this truth in the following manner.

“Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.” - St. Augustine

When this thought is considered, it makes the open rejection of God in the Garden and his continued rejection of Him all the more brazen. Thus God created us with need and dependency. His intent is for us to find fulfillment of our need in Him and for us to live our lives in dependency on Him. Our most fundamental problem is in our turning away from God and turning toward the shadow.

“There are times in our lives when we flee the very thing that will help us. There are times when we run away from God even though he is the source of all life, and can give us anything we need. We must return to God during these times of infidelity, and pray for the grace to see that it is God who is our first love, the one who gives us all good things, the greatest good of all.” (Chantal van der Plancke and Andre Knockaert, *15 days of prayer with Saint Catherine of Siena*, 110).

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All of creation is to be enjoyed. God puts in play through creation the means whereby He is seen in His creation. Yet when we look to and depend on the shadow to meet our needs, we will fail and we will fail miserably. The shadow can never be or do for us what only God can be or do. The shadow can never provide, it can only point.

The shadow is void of substance. When the shadow is **looked to** for the meeting of needs, it rings hollow like echoes in an empty valley. When the shadow is **leaned on** for support, it crumbles like thin ice incapable of bearing any real weight. The shadow is not wrong, but when used outside its design it will prove unsuccessful. Any time we turn to the shadow to do for us what only God can do for us, we will destroy the shadow.

The issues we have as individuals and then in relationships are designed by God to push, pull and compel us to look to God. The issues are designed by God to speak to our dependency on Him. Thus, issues are not necessarily wrong. They become wrong when we seek to address them outside of God. It is not the issue that is wrong, but the means and manner in which we address the issue.

What are our “issues”? We might speak of our “issues” as the desire to receive love without condition, acceptance without requirement, forgiveness without limit, favor without merit and service without reward. I believe our issues are those “base needs” we believe exist in everyone everywhere at all times. Regardless as to how the “issues” are described, they are those innate cravings that make us distinctly “image bearers”. Whatever those issues are they can only be properly addressed in God. When we look elsewhere, to the shadow, to meet our “needs” it will result in our demise.

All of my “sin” is simply a way of speaking to my needs and dependency. Every form of idolatry speaks to our needs being met in an inappropriate manner. Every form of idolatry is an open rebellion against and rejection of God. Whatever that “thing” is you turn to for the meeting of your “felt needs” is a rejection of God. If you turn to tobacco, alcohol, drugs, work, family, relationships, ministry, extreme sports, etc., if those “things” are looked to for the meeting of your needs and dependency, then you are rejecting God. This does not negate the shadow, but it does cry out that the shadow can never be or do for you what only God can be or do, and any time you turn to the shadow to meet your needs you are rejecting God.

God first and foremost, only and alone must be the one to whom we turn for the meeting of our needs. After we’ve turned to God, He then has put into play the shadow to cultivate and encourage our dependency on Him. The shadow enables us to have a foretaste of His ongoing goodness and grace. Friend, we have been designed with “issues”. **May we always turn to Him first and then may we savor the shadow only as it reflects Him, but never replacing Him.**

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