

What Really Matters

Things which really matter, contrary to the view of many, are blessings that we cannot see or touch. The spiritual values and gifts are the only things which last forever. Earthly things will rust, rot, and go away. The spiritual is eternal.

Why then, do we ignore the spiritual and concentrate all our energies and thoughts on the things of the world? Why do we not see beyond the temporary and seek to find those things which last?

One answer may be ignorance. The way to find people who know nothing are to look straight into the eyes of people who think they know everything. Braggarts and know-it-alls are far from God and his kingdom.

Sometimes people can be of the opinion that they know more than others. Isaac Asimov once wrote, somewhat tongue in cheek and still a little seriously, “People who think they know everything are a great annoyance to those of us who do.” He was a consummate humanist, a man who tried to explain everything rationally, who sidestepped the question time after time about whether there is a God.

Finally, near the end of his mortal life, he faced, and answered the question he had been seeking for many years. He wrote and love, and eternity, in his own way.

“The soft bonds of love,” writes Asimov, “are indifferent to life and death. They hold through time so that yesterday’s love is part of today’s and the confidence in tomorrow’s love is also part of today’s. And when one dies, the memory lives in the other, and is warm and breathing. And when both die — I almost believe, rationalist though I am — that somewhere it remains, indestructible and eternal, enriching all of the universe by the mere fact that once it existed.”

Perhaps Oscar Wilde, the great playwright, caught the gist of things when he said, “I can resist everything except temptation.” He was right. Temptation to sin, and to value things of the world over God are all around us.

Where do we find the things of God? We start with the Bible, where God speaks again and again to this question and to others.

We begin with words like, “One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.” ~Psalm 27:4

From the words which created the world and the universe, to the words of Jesus in the New Testament, there is ample evidence that the eternal things are foremost. Again and again, people trust in worldly matters and find them lacking. When we put our hand in the hands of the savior, we shall walk on water without doubt, we shall cross dangerous valleys in complete courage, and we shall live forever.

“Hold fast to the Bible,” wrote general and President Ulysses Grant. “To the influence of this Book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization and to this we must look as our guide in the future.”

We shall face challenges as we seek the spiritual, but we will find the great things among the things we once thought were inconsequential. IF we are not challenged, we do not grow. IF we meet them head on, and seek them gladly, God will give us growth and meaning.

“Challenge,” writes Brendon Burchard, “is the pathway to engagement and progress in our lives. But not all challenges are created equal. Some challenges make us feel alive, engaged, connected, and fulfilled. Others simply overwhelm us. Knowing the difference as you set bigger and bolder challenges for yourself is critical to your sanity, success, and satisfaction.”

Sometimes there will be tiny steps forward. Slow, almost imperceptible progress, but it can win races and change worlds. Remember the story of the tortoise and the hare. And Bryant Conan’s version of the turtle point of view, “Behold the turtle. He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out.”

We say it again and again, but finding God and the eternal blessings only he can provide come from reading the Bible, from seasons of prayer, and from regular trips to that spiritual place with the steeple on top, the church.

J.C. Ryle, an English clergyman of note, wrote that “the 'means of grace' are such as Bible reading, private prayer, and regularly worshipping God in Church,

wherein one hears the Word taught and participates in the Lord's Supper. I lay it down as a simple matter of fact that no one who is careless about such things must ever expect to make much progress in sanctification.

What he means, in plain terms, is this. Don't expect to go to heaven if you never visit God's house on earth.

Stark, but true, advice for us all as we fill our lives with prattle, and ignore the most important things.