

The Doctrine Of Interaction

Lesson One

The Issue: What is the state of mind that a Christian must have in order to interact with the temporal world? There can be no possible question about whether or not we will interact with it. But *how* shall we interact is of great importance. So, we should inquire from the Scriptures about how we are required to live in a world of measurable realities, and still do it with faith.

Underlying Assumptions as Expressed in Everyday Terms:

- 1) It is very obvious that one must interact with the temporal world based on a pattern of experiences. “If the stove is hot, then don’t touch it.” We should accumulate ways of interacting with the material world that we know are tried and true in everyday experience.
- 2) God has given each one of us a brain that serves to guide us in this sensitive business of relating to the external world. Since He provided it, then it must be used. It is reliable.

The Generalization: True faith as evidenced in the Bible is a kind of interaction between the mind of the believer and the world of matter and energy. We don’t interact with nature based on the fact that we are a part of nature; rather we interact based on Scriptural wisdom.

The Scripture Passage: Psalm 25 (read aloud before beginning lesson)

The Lesson:

- 1) There is no question as to whether or not we will interact with the temporal world. While there is no choice about that, we do have a choice as to how that interaction will take place.
- 2) The interaction between the mind of the believer and the temporal world of matter and energy is perhaps one of the most important keys to the living of the Christian life.
- 3) Faith, as presented to us in Psalm 25, is demonstrated to be the regulatory index between mind and matter.
- 4) David makes it clear in this passage that his relationship to God is a *defacto* way of interacting with the world of matter and energy. In the midst of very real troubles, he says:

- “In You I trust, O my God” (verse 2)
- “my hope is in You all day long.” (verse 5)
- “my eyes are ever on the Lord” (verse 15)
- “my hope is in You” (verse 21)

5) This principle of interacting with the world on the basis of trust and faith is highly counterintuitive. If one concentrates on relationship to God in time of trial to the exclusion of everything else, it appears to be a kind of negligence. It *is* neglecting a way of interacting with the material world based on common sense. Usually we think that that is a mistake of vast proportions.

6) Based on this reasoning it would seem right to seek a kind of balance. We certainly do need to pray and trust God, one might say, but not to the exclusion of reliable common sense.

7) According to this psalm, David chooses not to interact with the world of matter and energy based on the fact of his involvement with it. After all David has a body, his body has needs, and these needs are not trivial. David is in trouble with the law. King Saul is in pursuit and his life is in danger.

8) What this man of faith does is remarkable. He chooses to interact with the real world of matter and energy based on his faith in God and trust in the Lord’s promises. David determines that he will not interact on the basis of the physical variables that comprise that world.

9) There are many examples of this concept in the Old Testament. One is found in First Samuel 17. Here David confronts Goliath but not based on the fact that he has a body and that his body is so much smaller and less powerful than the giants.

10) In Numbers 13 and 14, the Israelites consider the conquest at Kadesh Barnea and arrive at the conclusion that the project is impossible. They made this decision or this appraisal on the basis of their own involvement in the world of matter and energy. This appraisal, we find out, was a sin!

11) Exodus 15-17: Again the Israelites are confronted with the matter and energy of the desert. Because they decided that they would interact with it based on the materiality of their bodies, they complained bitterly to the Lord. This is especially pronounced in chapter 17 at the place called Rephidim. There was no water and no food. Because they had bodies with real and non-trivial needs they concluded that the only form of interaction with the desert was on its terms. This was lack of faith.

1) Deuteronomy 8: In this passage the Lord warns His people that they would eventually turn away from the truth and begin to interact with the world of matter and energy based on their being a part of it. Consult Deuteronomy 8:10-20.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Why do you think we tend to consider it logical to interact with the world of matter and energy, in which we live and move, using the tactics and the thinking of that world?
- 2) What elements of this world's powers do you see listed in Psalm 25?
- 3) What does David ask for, in Psalm 25, to counteract the influence of those powers?
- 4) How does Psalm 25 demonstrate that "faith is the regulatory index between mind and matter"?
- 5) Someone who watched the way David approached his problems might have said that David was ignoring the reality of the dangers that threatened him. How would you respond to such a person?
- 6) Look at each of the examples of faithlessness listed in the lesson. In each example, list the kinds of dangers the people faced, and then list the kind of verbal response the people could have made which would have been regarded as faithful by the Lord.
- 7) During the past few weeks, what is the greatest claim for your attention and concern, which the world of matter and energy makes upon your mind? (Some examples might involve finances, human relationships, health issues.) What faithful statements might you echo from Psalm 25?
- 8) What steps could you take this coming week to demonstrate the kind of faith David had in the midst of threats to his well-being?