

The Doctrine of Interaction

Lesson 14

The Issue: Relying on what is invisible and eternal is often a challenge--especially when the visible world and natural approaches to problem solving constantly beckon. Choosing to rely upon the seen or the unseen carries with it certain consequences.

Underlying Assumptions as Expressed in Everyday Terms:

- 1) The Lord is always with us, but we must never forget that we live in a material world with real dynamics that must be respected for their own sake.
- 2) Never forgot that we do not live in splendid isolation from the same things with which all men must contend. Matters of life and circumstance demand our attention.
- 3) Start with what you know and have experienced. The factual is always more dependable than the theoretical – and after all, much of what’s talked about in the Bible certainly doesn’t fit within my own experience.

The Generalization: A believer must depend in an overt – even drastic – way upon incommensurables, in his or her interaction with matter, energy and information.

The Scripture Passage: Psalms 25:16 – 21

The Lesson:

- 1) David is in trouble, real trouble. Matter and energy are stacked against him. David is on the spot!
- 2) The dimensions of the spot: “lonely” v.16, “afflicted” v.16, “troubles of my heart have multiplied” v.17, “anguish” v.17, “distress” v.18, “sin” v.18, “enemies increased” v.19, hated v.19
- 3) Under the circumstances David could feel isolated, without resources, abandoned, resentful and perhaps bitter. But he does not. One is provoked to ask: “Why not?”
- 4) The answer to the question is patent. David is determined to depend upon something completely incommensurable with matter, energy and information. When we use the word “incommensurable” when referring to two different entities, they are

incommensurable when they cannot be measured by the same standard of measurement; or when they don't have a common basis by which they can be compared. In vernacular language, we say that they're "apples and oranges."

- 5) David's discourse outlines this kind of dependence: "turn to me" v.16, "be gracious to me" v.16, "free me from my anguish" v.17, "look upon my affliction and distress" v.18, "take away my sin" v.18, "see how" (referring to the invisible but present God) v.19, "guard my life" v.20, "rescue me" v.20, "let me not be put to shame" v.20, "I take refuge in you" v.20, "my hope is in you" v.21
- 6) These statements reveal the two dimensions involved in David's problem. There is the invisible God--and then there are the material realities. They are incommensurables, by their very natures.
- 7) David is in the middle between the two. All Christians are exactly in the same position.
- 8) These two items are complete incommensurables that cannot be weighed on the same kind of scale. The Invisible God is the subject of the Revelation and the subject of trust and faith. On the other hand, material realities can be quantified, physically described and empirically evaluated.
- 9) David determined to depend in a drastic way upon something completely incommensurable with material realities. He is depending upon the unseen God. By taking this stance, David is depending upon a WAY OF THINKING!
- 10) There is a WAY OF THINKING that recognizes and relies upon the reality of God and the validity of revelation. Then there is a WAY OF THINKING that relies upon quantification and predictions based on the material.
- 11) So, the reality of the invisible God and the existence of a revelation is supposed to result in a WAY OF THINKING called faith and trust.
- 12) Therefore, faith and trust in God is a WAY OF THINKING; not only thinking about God and the invisible things; but also a way of thinking about the material realities like matter and energy.
- 13) The reality of God and a REVEALED WAY OF THINKING are not coequal but they are organic: The one grows out of the other.
- 14) David has put drastic dependence on one WAY OF THINKING about all reality, and he has had to subsequently withdraw confidence in any other WAY OF THINKING.

- 15) Trust in God is indistinguishable from a WAY OF THINKING about the relationship between incommensurables.
- 16) We always look at the material world that surrounds us, in the light of the word of God and the invisible world. We never evaluate God, Scripture and the invisible in the light of the material world.
- 17) And all of this applies to WAYS OF THINKING about situations and circumstances.
- 18) Everybody recognizes that the God of the Bible, and matter and energy, are incommensurables. This understanding is not the problem. WAYS OF THINKING produce dependence!
- 19) What we decide to depend upon is directly anchored to a WAY OF THINKING. What David did was to bring a WAY OF THINKING to bear upon his troubles.
- 20) TRUST IN GOD MEANS BRINGING THIS WAY OF THINKING INTO THE MATERIAL, TEMPORAL ENVIRONMENT!

Questions for Discussion

- 1) In speaking with an intelligent and interested nonbeliever, how would you introduce the subject of the incommensurability of spiritual things versus material things? In speaking with a teenager?
- 2) What are the strongest evidences of incommensurables you see in this psalm?
- 3) What do you know about the life of David (from this psalm or from your own study) that would indicate that his “way of thinking” was not only helpful to him, but also brought forth results in the material world?
- 4) Choose one concept from this lesson and show how that concept is borne out in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31.
- 5) Choose that same concept, or another from this lesson, and show how that concept is borne out in 1 Corinthians 2:1-16.
- 6) Explain this statement, using Scripture (1 Corinthians might be helpful): “The reality of God and a REVEALED WAY OF THINKING are not coequal but they are organic: The one grows out of the other.”
- 7) This last week, you undoubtedly faced a challenge or two. How would what you learned from this lesson have made things different, had you known and applied it last week?

- 8) What steps will you take in order to be able to develop faith and trust in God?
What role will the evaluation of incommensurables play in such steps?