

The Doctrine Of Interaction

Lesson Two

The Issue: One of the keys to the living of the Christian life is our interaction with the external world. The Lord Himself in the Scriptures has ordained how we are to interact with Him in terms of worship and prayer. In addition, God has determined for us just how we are to interact with the temporal order of things.

Underlying Assumptions as Expressed in Everyday Terms:

- 1) I am part of the world of energy and matter. This is strictly unavoidable! As a consequence of that fact, then, I'm compelled to rely principally on common sense.
- 2) The external world is the source of my greatest challenges. These pressures are real and exacting. I dare not ignore them.
- 3) One cannot deal with every condition of life based on religion.

Generalization: **I have made a decision not to interact with the world of matter and energy based on the fact that I am a part of it.**

The Scripture Passage: Psalm 25 and associated texts

The Lesson:

- 1) Faith is a way of interacting with the world of temporal things. It is not merely subscribing to a certain set of fixed religious practices.
- 2) David's problems are all coming from the material world:
 - he has enemies (v.2)
 - he doesn't want to be put to shame (v.3)
 - David is lonely and afflicted (v.16)
 - His enemies have increased (v.19)
 - David is hated (v.19)
- 3) The temporal order is composed of many things, but we will focus here on two of them as we contemplate the challenges we all face: We refer to the forces of matter and energy. This is where David is fighting. This is where we all are.
- 4) David in this psalm writes about his relationship to God. He teaches us that one's relationship to the Lord is a *defacto* way of interacting with the world of energy and matter. This man is not ignoring the situation; rather, he has determined to deal with the situation by complete trust in Someone he cannot see.

5) We can take note of the fact that David presents no supposed “balance” between faith and common sense.

6) David reveals an astounding state of mind in this psalm. David chooses not to interact with the world of energy and matter based on the fact of his involvement in the world of energy and matter!

7) He has a body and he has needs. These needs are not superficial. They are genuine and fundamental needs. David wants to live and not die. David wants to be free of his anxiety. This good man wants to live without threats.

8) This is typical of all of us, one presumes. We are living in the world of matter and energy and this is a dangerous place to be. We suffer many things in this world and we die from forces more powerful than we.

9) So, what shall we do?! Shall we live in such a way here in this world based on the fact that we have bodies and that those bodies have needs? Are we going to live here on the basis of the fact – and it is a fact – all of us are part of the world of energy and matter?

10) Let’s consider the case of Abraham, that great man of faith. His experience with the Lord is completely parallel with that of David and with ours as well.

11) As our consideration of this psalm continues, let’s interject three notable points at which father Abraham interacted with the world of energy and matter. We will note that each level represents an increasing level of involvement of this great man of faith and his circumstances, and a widening of the scope of his influence and faith.

-#1 Abraham had a body. In this instance we know from Genesis 12:4 that he was 75 years old when the Lord told him to go to Canaan. This man is already old and he will become a lot older before the promised son would be given. According to Hebrews 11:12, Abraham’s body was as good as dead when Isaac was finally born.

So where does the threshold of the world of matter and energy begin? It begins with our own bodies. If we interact with our own bodies in a biblical, revealed way then we can move to a second level, one in which other people and physical circumstances beyond our own bodies, are involved.

-#2 We see this second level in the fact that Abraham has a wife. Sarai is old and she is barren (Genesis 16:1,2). Involving someone else makes the whole interaction much more difficult. He is old but still able to reproduce but his wife is another question. Now he must interact with the body of his wife and do so on the basis of faith and not on the wisdom of human experience.

What are we to think in the face of certain circumstances that appear fixed and incapable

of remediation? Shall we interact with the world of matter and energy on the foundation of the Word of God or shall we resign ourselves to the “plain facts” of the case?

-#3 Then Abraham had to interact with the body of his only son Isaac. The patriarch was required by the Lord to make a sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19). He was completely prepared to do that very thing. But the stakes keep going up for the man of faith. Now he must kill Isaac and immolate his body as a sacrifice and then expect a resurrection of Isaac from the dead!

This means that Abraham had to believe that after the sacrifice of Isaac, wherein the boy’s body would have been converted into smoke, heat and ash-- that Isaac’s body would be completely restored without the loss of a single molecule!

12) As Abraham moves through these 3 points of interaction with matter and energy it becomes harder. At each level, it becomes more a direct affront to his personal experience.

13) Both of the examples of faith in this discussion (David and Abraham) chose not to interact with the world of matter and energy based on their experience of these things. Through their lives and the generalizations we can draw from them, they are teaching us the Doctrine of Interaction.

Discussion Questions

1. Explain the following in your own words: “David (in Psalm 25) teaches us that one’s relationship to the Lord is a *defacto* way of interacting with the world of energy and matter. “
2. Why do you think that David in Psalm 25 does not admit a “middle ground,” or combination, of faith and what we call common sense?
3. Show from the life of Abraham the three increasing levels in which he demonstrated his faith in the way he dealt with the world of matter and energy.
4. What details from the life of Abraham, and from the life of David as seen in Psalm 25, illustrate “the plain facts” of their difficulties?
5. What are the most pressing issues in your life in terms of the demands that the external world make on you? What have you learned in this lesson that will be most helpful to you in that battle? What Scripture passages were most meaningful?
6. For your own situation, show how the three levels affect you and those around you.

7. List steps you can take this week to make active the generalization, "I have made a decision not to interact with the world of matter and energy based on the fact that I am a part of it."