

CGM PASTORAL CARE CONFERENCE – AUGUST 2013
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MESSAGE 1: GOD - THE FOUNDATIONAL BASIS OF OUR LIVES AND MINISTRY

Introduction

- God ought to be the foundational basis for every aspect of our lives
- By this, I mean:
 - o knowing God
 - o our relationship with God
 - o our walk with God
 - o our worship of God, dependence on Him and submission to Him, His will and ways
- God ought to be the primary concentration and motivation of our heart
- Only when this is true can other aspects of our lives find their proper place and expression
- The next three areas/messages flow forth from this foundational basis

Understanding and knowing God of vital importance

Jeremiah 9:23–24

23 Thus says the Lord, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches;

24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the Lord.

- It is vitally important that we understand and know God
- Not just mental knowledge, or the ability to recite God's attributes
- There must be spiritual insight, leading to the appropriate response of worship, submission to God, and deep fellowship, relationship with God
- V24: “that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things”
 - o Here, we see the moral attributes of God and what He desires to see in us
 - o For our own lives:
 - renewing of our minds and transformation of character
 - growth in moral and spiritual stature
 - o For our ministry:
 - the content and substance of our ministry and impact on others

Love God, worship and serve Him, our lives a living sacrifice

- Love God with all our heart and love our neighbour as ourselves
- This is at the heart of what God requires of all men

Matthew 22:35–40

35 One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him,
36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

37 And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’

38 “This is the great and foremost commandment.

39 “The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

40 “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

- Worship and serve God is of primary importance
 - o The Lord Jesus: Matt 4:10 – “You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only”
- Rom 12:1 - Our lives are to be a living sacrifice, our spiritual service of worship

Our greatest joy and fulfilment

- Why is it fitting as well as the greatest joy and fulfilment for us to worship, love and serve God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength?
- Answer: Because God is perfect – in greatness and moral goodness
- In His greatness, God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is omnipotent (all-powerful), omnipresent, omniscient and wise, infinite, self-existent, eternal, immutable (unchanging in His attributes and character), efficient and sovereign
- In His moral goodness, God is loving, holy and pure, righteous, just, true, faithful, gracious, kind, merciful and patient
- In each of these attributes or qualities, God is perfectly and completely so
- Both aspects - God’s perfection in greatness and moral goodness - are crucial
 - o If there is an all-powerful being who is not morally perfect, it would not be appropriate to worship, love, serve and obey him with all our heart
 - o If there is a being who is morally good but weak, not omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, lacking in knowledge and wisdom - such a being may make mistakes and his will is not perfect - it would not be appropriate to wholeheartedly worship, serve and obey him
- God is our creator and provider
- God is the source and basis of all that is positive and good, all that truly matters

James 1:17

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

- Life - both physical and spiritual, eternal life – the life of God
 - o John 14:6 - Jesus is the Way and the Truth and the Life
 - o 1 John 5:11-12 – “... God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”
- The fruit of the Spirit
 - o Gal 5:22-23 - Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control
- Spiritual strength and security
 - o Ps 18:1-2 - God is our fortress, our refuge and strength
 - o Phil 4:13 - I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me

- True knowledge and wisdom
 - o Col 1:9 – that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding
 - o Col 2:3 - in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge
- God has provided for us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him

2 Peter 1:2–3

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;
 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

God’s perfect will

- In the Lord and in His will, we find meaning and purpose in life, blessings and well-being
- He is the almighty God and His will is perfect
- We ought to wholeheartedly worship, serve and obey Him - it is appropriate; it is right
- The will of God is always most appropriate - it is always what ought to be because it will always be consistent with God's perfect character, His perfect knowledge and wisdom. It is the best, the most meaningful
- The correct starting point in our approach to life is God - God and His will - because God is perfect and His will is perfect

Reinforcing the biblical basis

- I now want to reinforce the biblical basis and support for this approach to life
- As we reflect on what God has revealed in the Scriptures, our conviction can deepen, our faith can be more firmly anchored and the Lord may grant fresh insight
- God is perfect

Matthew 5:48

“Therefore you are to be perfect,
 as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- Rom 12:2 - God’s will is good, acceptable and perfect
- What the perfect God requires of us - true from O.T. times

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

12 “Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

13 and to keep the Lord’s commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?

- o These are the words of Moses to Israel: “What does the Lord your God require from you?”
- o This is something central - what God requires of us, our approach to life
- o What is emphasised here? Fear the Lord your God, walk in all His ways, love Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul

- o Reverence for God, loving Him and serving Him – this should be the focus and concentration in our lives
 - o Not partially nor half-heartedly, but “with all your heart and with all your soul”
 - o And “to walk in all His ways” – God’s commandments, the will of God
 - o “for your good” – good for you - for your well-being
- Let us now look at David's primary concern for Solomon – how he should go about his life:

1 Chronicles 28:9

“As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind;
for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him;
but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever.

- o These were the parting words of a godly father, concerned for the well-being of his son
- o At the heart of David's concern for Solomon, his advice and exhortation to Solomon: "Know the God of your father"
- o Knowledge of God is critical - not just head knowledge
- o Then "serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind."
- o We see here again, the primary issue of life, approach to life: Seek God, know God, then serve Him
- o Not half-heartedly, but with a whole heart and a willing mind
- o The primary concentration of the heart is on the Lord and serving the Lord with a willing mind - the mind is involved
- o Serving the Lord with understanding and knowledge - knowledge of the Lord, the ways of God and truth
- o Let us not be presumptuous - if we reject this approach to life - if we forsake the Lord - He too will reject us
- o Outward conduct is not enough - God searches our hearts and knows our inner thoughts and the true intent of our hearts

This approach to life – reflected throughout the Scriptures

- At the heart of the message of the Scriptures is God - the perfect God - calling us to Himself to know Him and His ways and to abide by His instructions and His will
 - o We are to concentrate on knowing the Lord, knowing His will and living accordingly
 - o In the Lord and in His will, we will have well-being, peace and joy
- A key passage in the O.T. - so important and central to the Jews that it forms part of the daily rabbinic liturgy

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

4 “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!

5 “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

6 “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.

7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

8 “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your

forehead.

9 "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

- o V4 - Hear O Israel! - calling all Israel to pay attention – something very important - the Lord is our God, the Lord is one!
- o There is only one true God and He is our Lord and our God
- o V5 - And we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul and with all our might
- o V6 - This attitude and reality must constantly be in our heart
- o Vs 7-9 – Reflects this primary concentration and constant preoccupation of our hearts and the importance of transmitting this reality to all we love

- That this ought to be our approach to life - and it is of foremost importance - is confirmed by the teaching of the Lord Jesus:

Mark 12:28-30

28 One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?"

29 Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel!

The Lord our God is one Lord;

30 and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

- o What is foremost – of primary importance? The Lord our God is one Lord. There is one God; He is the Lord and He is our God
- o And we are to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, strength
- o We are to concentrate on the Lord - know Him, love Him and serve Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength - with our whole being and all our faculties
- o All else can find their proper place when they flow forth from this reality in our hearts

- A living sacrifice

Romans 12:1-2

1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- Our lives and everything we say and do ought to be an expression of our worship and service to God

Matthew 4:8-10

8 Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;

9 and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me."

10 Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'"

- o You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only - this ought to be the concentration of our lives
- o This does not mean we should not serve other people - we should have the heart of a servant - ministry, service has a very important place in our lives

- o It means our worship of God, our service to God is primary
- o Service to others, service in any other context, must not in any way contradict our service to God and submission to God or in any way dilute it
- o In fact, all true service must flow forth from and be part of our expression of worship of God and service to God
- Our relationship with God a priority

Psalm 73:25-26

25 Whom have I in heaven but You?

And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.

26 My flesh and my heart may fail,

But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

- o These two verses express the priority of our relationship with God and what God ought to mean to us
- o It does not mean that we cannot have meaningful relationships with others - or that nothing else on earth matters to us
- o The Psalmist expresses himself in this way to impress upon us in a powerful way that at the heart of life and the deep longing of his heart and what really matters to him is God
- o It is as if nothing else matters - only God and his relationship with God matters
- o But is it so that nothing else matters? In reality, it is not. The Lord does want us to love and be concerned for others, as well as to attend to various issues and responsibilities in life
- o Many things in life - even material things - have an appropriate place in our lives
- o But we ought not allow anything, whether it be material things, people or issues, to cloud or dilute the primacy of our worship of God and faithfulness to Him
- o Other things must take their proper place from the starting point of God being primary in our lives
- This kind of attitude and approach to life is exemplified in the life and teaching of the apostle Paul
- Paul is deeply devoted to the Lord - his earnest longing is that others too may be deeply and wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord

1 Corinthians 7:35

This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

- o We should not allow anything to distract us from our devotion to God
- o If there is anything that dilutes our devotion to God, that distracts our devotion to God, we need to correct that
- o We must nurture our devotion to God, and every aspect of our outworking ought to be consistent with devotion to God
- Such a person has only one ambition in life - to be pleasing to God
- This is reflected in the lives of Paul and his co-workers

2 Corinthians 5:9

Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

- o This is what ought to be our ambition, our purpose in life
- o What motivates us - to be pleasing to God

Concluding remarks

- To respond well to God's call, we must set our hearts on knowing God, His ways, His will, His guidance and His enabling - so that we will not walk according to the flesh – according to our own ideas, plans, capabilities, strength or the ways of the world
- Our loyalty and submission to God must be primary
 - o Not the views, assertions and will of man – whether our own or those of others - though we give due respect to others – and learn from them to the degree they can help us to know God, submit to God and be faithful to God
- We seek to do everything to the glory of God

1 Corinthians 10:31

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do,
do all to the glory of God.