



Crucifying The Wrong Thing

by Art Dappen

When the Real Problem is Not Identified

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CRUCIFIED**

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King Saul was disobedient to God, but he became consumed with the idea that David was a threat to his kingdom. “And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.” (1 Samuel 18:9.) The real threat to Saul’s kingdom was his own careless attitude and faithless choices, following the people’s voice rather than God’s voice. As a matter of fact, David was a faithful son-in-law, and presented no real threat to Saul. **When the real problem is not identified, the wrong thing gets crucified.**

Jacob’s sons were disobedient to their father, but they became consumed with the idea that their brother Joseph was a threat to them. “And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him... And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.” (Gen 37:4,8.) They planned to kill Joseph, but settled on selling him into slavery and putting blood on his coat to cause their father to think he had been devoured by a lion. Their real problem was envy and a lack of righteousness, but they dealt harshly with Joseph, as if he were the problem.

Would to God that men would deal with their own unrighteousness as harshly as they deal with the things they perceive to be the problem. **When the real problem is not identified, the wrong thing gets crucified.**

The Jewish leaders and the Pharisees were a rebellious generation, but they were consumed with the idea that Jesus was a threat to the nation. “Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? For this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.” (John 11:47-48.) Their real problem was a lack of faith and lack of true righteousness, not recognizing that their traditional rituals did not please God. They had the soldiers nail Jesus to a cross, but should have crucified their own traditions and desires. (See Galatians 5:24.) **When the real problem is not identified, the wrong thing gets crucified.**

Jesus told us to “not judge” with wrong judgment. He said, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” (John 7:24.) Due to poor judgment, many innocent people suffer. “Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.” (Hab 1:4.)

Many people misunderstand Jesus’ words to “not judge”, and so they allow all kinds of sin into their families and churches, thinking that they are not to judge it. But God commands us to “let judgment flow down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream”. (Amos 5:24.) This word “judgment” means proper discernment and proper action. It does not mean misplacing the blame (blaming the president for the burned roast). Nor does it mean finding no blame at all (thinking there is nothing we can do to avoid burned roasts).

The followers of Jesus have the truth, and by that truth we can judge all things properly. We have the mind of Christ. We are capable of judging righteous judgment. We have the Word of God, and God expects us to use it to judge all things properly, and to act in accordance with it. “Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?” (1 Cor 6:3.)

The Israelites who left Egypt under Moses’ leadership were a rebellious lot, but they were sure that Moses and Aaron were the guilty ones. The phrase “against Moses” occurs eleven times in Exodus and Numbers, referring to the people’s attitude against the very man who was anointed by God to bring them salvation from their slavery. Why didn’t they judge correctly? Why didn’t they identify the real problem? Because of unbelief. The Bible says, “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” (Hebrews 3:19.) They could not enter into the promised land because of unbelief. Unbelief is the absence of faith in God. Unbelief is confiding in what men say, instead of trusting in what God says. The people murmured against Moses in unbelief. They did not believe in God, and neither did they believe in Moses. That was the real problem. But **when the real problem was not identified, the wrong thing got crucified.**

Today we see many examples of lack of proper judgment. We see many examples of “straining at gnats and swallowing camels”. Some churches are divided over the exact significance of symbolic observances such as the Lord’s supper or baptism, while at the same time they tolerate worldly television programming. Their unbelief

causes them to see great fault in the brother who baptizes with different words, but little or no fault in the television newscasters who fulfill the proverb: “An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire.” (Proverbs 16:27.)

Moreover, we see great emphasis given by some to the “rapture” (sudden exit) of our bodies out of this world some day, but little emphasis given to the “rapture” (sudden exit) of our thoughts out of this world’s false philosophies right now. Instead of coming out of falsehood, many Christians accept it, and even send their children to be educated by the teachers of false philosophy. However the Scripture warns: “Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.” (Prov 14:7.) And again God admonishes: “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.” (Prov 19:27.) Paul cautioned: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” (Col.2:8.) Jesus commanded, “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” (Mat 15:14.) God exhorted: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (2 Cor 6:17.) Here God is speaking about a “rapture” (sudden exit) which separates us from false philosophies right now.

In the light of these Scriptures, why do Christians send their children to learn false philosophy? Because of unbelief. Unbelief causes people to disregard the warnings of Scripture. Many enter through the wide gate, but few enter the narrow gate of obedience. The majority follow the crowd in unbelief, while the minority follow Jesus in faith.

In the world great importance is attached to the recognition which educators grant (degrees, honors, positions, awards), but little importance to the recognition which God gives to those who meditate on the Scripture and have upright character. When students submit themselves to years of copying godless, materialistic philosophy into notebooks, they are congratulated for having earned a degree. But if they would spend years copying the Bible into notebooks, they would be asked, “What good is it to copy the Bible?” Gross unbelief causes people to value the praise of men more than the blessing of God. Many people doubt the practical value of God’s blessing.

False judgment proceeds from false values in the heart. James pointed out these false values when he wrote, “For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay (splendid) clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?” (Jam 2: 2- 4.) When our judgment is based upon the appearances of wealth or poverty, then we are acting in unbelief, not in Scriptural wisdom which is “without partiality and without hypocrisy” (Jam 3:17.) Jesus said not to lay up for ourselves treasures on earth, and he explained why. (See Mat 6: 19-24.) Is not our failure to obey Jesus in this a matter of plain unbelief? Are we not like the rich young man who departed in unbelief from the Lord? Yet we think that such renunciation is unnecessary and impossible because we have false values in our hearts. That is, we have unbelief.

The unbelieving – like king Saul, the brothers of Joseph, the Pharisees in Jerusalem, and the Israelites in the wilderness – will forever be crucifying the innocent while they are blind to the real sin. Unbelief is a rejection of Scripture. Unbelief accords little importance to the Word of God and much importance to appearances. It judges with partiality and hypocrisy, passing over real violations of the Scripture as if they were nothing, but finding great fault with things which are not even violations of Scripture at all. What harm had David done to Saul? When had Joseph sinned against his brothers? Where had Moses failed the people of Israel? Jesus asked the Jews, “Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.” (John 8: 46-47.) The real problem is unbelief: that people will not hear the Word of God because they are not of God.

Wrong judgment comes from the world and from its erroneous ways of thinking. Proper judgment comes from the Word of God. Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8: 31-32.) For this reason our children need to know and understand every word of God. They need to be diligently taught the Bible. They need to learn to study it for themselves. Their ability to perceive the true situation and to judge correctly will be 100% dependent upon a full understanding of Scripture. “Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do

err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.” (Matt 22:29.)

Yet we see that the education which our children are receiving is more academic than spiritual. The word “academic” comes from the name of Plato’s school in Athens. In about 387 BC Plato settled in a house near a gymnasium called the “Academy”, about a mile northwest of the city walls of Athens. He organized a college with a definite membership which met sometimes in the walks of the “Academy” and sometimes in his own house or garden. He developed a multifaceted philosophy that includes a theory of knowledge, a theory of human conduct, a theory of the state, and a theory of the universe. Some scholars consider the Academy to have been the first university. Such subjects as astronomy, biological sciences, mathematics, and political science were investigated there. Due to the name of his college, the type of study which he promoted is still called “academic” study to this day. Academic studies emphasize logic, art, and science in order to promote knowledge and culture.

Let us distinguish between “academic” study and the type of study which Jesus and the apostles encouraged: the study of inspired Scripture. Let us further note that Jesus and his followers were “unlearned men”. Jesus did not teach “academics”. The way of Christ is a totally different way. The Holy Spirit was sent to be our teacher.

But in spite of Jesus’ general warnings about false teachers and Paul’s specific warnings concerning philosophy and human science (See Col 2:8; 1Cor 1:19-25; Rom 1:18-23; 1Tim 6:20; 2Tim 2:16-18; 2Tim 3:7-9; 2Tim 4:2- 4), the church gradually slid away from the pure gospel and began teaching a mixture of the gospel and worldly academics (which Paul calls philosophy). The power of the gospel was lost when it was combined with “academics”. Eve lost her faith in God’s word after a single talk with the serpent. That’s how quick “academics” can cause unbelief.

When the real problem is not identified, the wrong thing gets crucified. The problem is unbelief, and the cause of unbelief is false teaching based upon “philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” (Col 2:8.) Modern Christians have abandoned their calling to go into all the world and teach the gospel to every creature. Instead of obeying God and diligently teaching his eternal and spiritual word to our children, we teach them a mixture of the eternal and the temporal, a mixture of the spiritual and the carnal, a mixture of serving God and serving

mammon, a mixture of the word of God and the words of the ungodly. We do this for reasons that we justify in our own minds, but which the Scriptures do not justify. We defend “academics” as zealously as the Jews defended their religious traditions.

When the real problem is not identified, the wrong thing gets crucified. David was not Saul’s real problem. Joseph was not his brothers’ real problem. Moses was not the children of Israel’s real problem. And the Bible is not the real problem. Years ago the public school educators eliminated the Bible, thinking they were going to “free” the children from so many superstitions. Now we can see the tragic results in America; we see a generation such as described in Proverbs: “There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.” (Proverbs 30: 11-14.)

I have heard many say that we don’t need so much Bible. They say we shouldn’t cram the Bible down the children’s throats or they will hate the Bible. Now those three statements come directly from the mouth of the devil. I beg your pardon: we DO need that much Bible. We are NOT “cramming the Bible down their throats” when we teach it to the children day and night and in every possible way: speaking it, writing it, and thinking it. The children will NOT hate the Bible when they are taught it thoroughly and constantly. Those are lies of Satan, and do not come from the Bible. The children will only hate the Bible if they are taught a mixture of worldly wisdom and the Bible, because the worldly wisdom will cause the child to doubt the truth.

The problem with education is not “too much Bible”. The problem is “too little Bible” and too much of other things. Where in the Scriptures did God ever reprove anyone for having “too much Bible” or “too much truth”? God’s constant complaint is “too much idolatry” and “too much falsehood” and “too much friendship with the world”.

Art Dappen (1946-2006) was a leader in the homeschool movement in Mexico. He served for over 30 years as a missionary with his wife of 35 years, Linn. Art's ministry included the creation and free distribution of a Spanish reading program for homeschoolers. About two years before his home-going, he and Linn added seven Mexican orphans to their family, making them the parents of seventeen. Two married daughters in the U.S. have blessed them with 13 grandchildren (so far). Linn and the rest of the family continue to live and minister in Mexico.

Art received his high school education at an elite boarding school in Connecticut, and continued on to university. One day, as a new Christian in a graduate-level chemistry class, he came to a realization. As he studied the equations on the blackboard, the thought came to him: "Jesus Christ did not dedicate his life to what is written on that blackboard." He left school and purposed to serve the Lord.

A daughter said, "He always felt it was a privilege to throw it all away."

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