

"GOD, I WOULD NOT DO IT THAT WAY"

Part 2: ABRAHAM AND HIS FAMILY

Assume that God is forming an advisory committee. God wants to evaluate the entire process He used to bring salvation to our world. He wants our reactions to His methods and means used to bring Jesus to be our Savior. That includes the way He used almost 1500 years to prepare this world for Jesus, the way He brought Jesus, the way He made Jesus the Christ, the way He brought the church into existence, and the way He informed the world about forgiveness.

God selects you to be on this advisory committee. He wants every member of the committee to be very open and very honest. He wants every member of the committee to critique anything in the entire process, and explain his or her critique.

I. **Let's quietly listen to the first committee meeting. It is your turn to speak.**

A. **"God, it has been my experience that if you want to accomplish truly good things you must use genuinely good people."**

1. "The more important the accomplishment, the more important is it to use people who are exceptionally good people."
2. "Simply stated: if you want to change the thinking and emotions of the people of the world, you must use the best people in the world."
3. "It is essential that good people of great character be used so they can be an excellent, powerful influence."
 - a. "People in general are very skeptical, very critical."
 - b. "If you give people half a reason to criticize, they will criticize."
 - c. "If people have the choice between changing the way they think and live or criticizing the new ways, people will choose criticism almost every time."
4. "I think the biggest mistake in your plan to bring salvation to people was this: You used the wrong people when you began."
 - a. "I would never begin producing salvation by using Abraham and his family."
 - b. "That family simply had too many problems to criticize."
 - c. "They did not have the potential for being a powerful influence."

B. **"Take an honest look at Abraham and his extended family."**

1. "I would not begin with a man who used his wife to deceive other people as Abraham did."
 - a. "I would not begin with a man who lied about his wife being his wife."
 - b. "I would not begin with a man who allowed a king to take his wife with the intention of marrying her because the king thought the woman was unmarried."

- c. "I would not begin with a man who had a son by a woman who was not his wife."
 - d. "I would not begin with a man who made his own son and that son's mother permanently leave his family."
 - e. "I am sorry God, but that was a mistake."
2. "I would not use a man who showed enormous favoritism among his two sons as Isaac did."
 - a. "I would not use a man who dearly loved one son and disregarded the other son."
 - b. "I would not use a family in which the blind father's wife plotted against and deceived him."
 - c. "I would not use a family in which both sons despised each other."
 - d. "I am sorry God, but that was a mistake."
 3. "I would not use a man who lied and exploited others for his own benefit as Jacob did."
 - a. "He used his own brother's hunger to take something precious from his brother."
 - b. "He intentionally lied to deceive his own blind father."
 - c. "He took advantage of his father-in-law."
 - d. "He had two wives, and he was partial to one wife and her children."
 - e. "His family interactions looked more like a war zone than a family."
 - f. "He had horrible control of his wives and sons."
 - g. "I am sorry God, but that was a mistake."
 4. "I would not use men who were guilty of despicable things such rape, hate, deceit, and murderous violence like the sons of Jacob were."
 - a. "Jacob's sons made a covenant with the men of a city, sealed the agreement with those men's circumcision, and then killed all of them when they could not defend themselves" (Genesis 34).
 - b. "Judah used Tamar as if she were a prostitute" (Genesis 38).
 - c. "Reuben raped one of his father's concubines" (Genesis 35:22).
 - d. "Nine brothers sold Joseph into slavery" (Genesis 37:18-28).
 - e. "Those boys had enough jealousy and hatred in them to infect many generations."
- C. "Perhaps I can best communicate my point by stating what I would do."**
1. "I would start my plan for salvation with a man who was the ideal person, the ideal husband, and the ideal father."
 2. "This man would be married to the ideal wife who would be the ideal mother."
 3. "Their children would love and respect each other, and treat each other with great kindness and consideration."

4. "The children would become adults who were kind, who were great husbands and wives, and who were great parents.
5. "Even through future generations, people would talk about what a great family and a wonderful example these people had been for generations."
6. "The church has enough problems trying to get people to be godly without tracing its roots through a family who obviously had so many flaws and faults."

D. Is that the way you would reason?

II. Look at the kind of people often chosen to lead the church in spiritually maturing.

A. I hope that we all are in agreement that we want a person who is genuinely devoted to God, who is genuinely converted to Jesus Christ.

1. I hope that is a "given."
2. As a "given," our discussion goes beyond that consideration.

B. If we seek people to lead us in spiritual service and involvement, what kind of devoted, converted person do we want?

1. What do we stress?
 - a. Do we stress commitment and ability, or do we stress prominence?
 - b. Do we stress a deep love for God, or do we stress material success?
 - c. Do we stress having the attitude and spirit of Jesus, or do we stress business achievements?
 - d. Do we stress great faith, or do we stress educational accomplishments?
2. Are prominence, material success, business achievements, and educational accomplishments bad things?
 - a. No, of themselves they are not bad things.
 - b. But neither are they of themselves spiritual things.
 - c. They are no substitute for spiritual commitment, ability, deep love for God, the attitude and spirit of Jesus, and faith.
3. What is the basic difference between the two lists of characteristics and qualities?
 - a. Prominence, material achievements, business success, and educational accomplishments focus on the human accomplishments of the individual.
 - b. Spiritual commitment and ability, a deep love for God, the attitude and spirit of Jesus, and a great faith focus on the accomplishments of God in Christ.

- c. A common tendency among all of us is to depend on human achievement for spiritual success.
- d. God wants us our confidence to be placed in His achievement as being the key to spiritual success.

III. Consider Paul's statement to the Christians at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 4:7.

A. Context:

1. Paul had some powerful critics in the church at Corinth.
 - a. His critics attempted to destroy his credibility by declaring how unimpressive Paul was in person.
 - i. "He is a terrible speaker" (2 Corinthians 10:10).
 - ii. "In person his physical appearance is most unimpressive" (2 Corinthians 10:10).
 - b. The implication was this: "God's spokesman who delivers God's glorious message surely would look and sound like someone other than Paul."
2. Paul said that his purpose was to impress them with Christ, not himself.
 - a. The God who promised "Light shall shine out of darkness" is the One who shone in Paul and his company's hearts to give the light of God's glory in Jesus' face.
 - b. The precious good news he shared was about Jesus, not about Paul.

B. The verse:

2 Corinthians 4:7 **But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.**

1. God placed this incredible treasure of the good news about Jesus Christ in the clay pots of Paul and his company.
2. Clay pots had little value--they literally were "dirt cheap."
3. The treasure in those pots was too valuable to even estimate.
4. For the sake of illustration, it would be like placing a billion dollars in an empty coffee can.
5. "That is stupid! Why do that?"
 - a. There is a very important reason.
 - b. God did it that way so people would be impressed with God and what God did in Jesus, not the container that revealed the treasure.
 - c. The container had just one purpose: to draw attention to the value of the treasure.

C. "But I would not do it that way!"

1. That is the point.
2. We do not do things the way God does them.

3. God's ways powerfully declare what God had done and is doing, not what we have done and are doing.
4. Our tendency is to try to impress people with us; if people are sufficiently impressed with us perhaps we can impress them with our God.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Isaiah said, speaking for God in Isaiah 55:8,9, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."

Christian faith and existence are not based on demanding that God function and work in ways we would function and work. Christian faith and existence constantly seek to grow in understanding of God's ways. We learn His ways. We do not demand He do things our ways.