

“Looking Spiritual & Dodging the Lord’s Calling”
Mark 7:1-13 (Pt. 3)
May 5, 2024
Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service
Pastor Nicoletti

The Reading of the Word

Good morning!

It’s good to be back with you this morning. I’ll be sharing about my recent trip to Turkey with Hope Russia on Wednesday night at prayer meeting, and so I encourage you to join us at prayer meeting if you’d like to hear more.

But this morning, we turn again to the Gospel of Mark. We’ve spent two Sunday in the first 23 verses of Mark chapter seven. But we’re going to spend one more sermon there, to zero in on the example Jesus uses in his critique of the Pharisees, and to consider what it might expose about our own spiritual tendencies.

And so we’ll hear now from Mark 7:6-13.

Please do listen carefully, for this is God’s Word for us this morning.

Mark writes:

⁶ And he [that is, Jesus] said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

“‘This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;

⁷ in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”

⁸ You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”

⁹ And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! ¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ ¹¹ But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban”’ (that is, given to God)— ¹² then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, ¹³ thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

This is the word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let’s pray ...

Prayer of Illumination

Lord, you are our hiding place and our shield,
we hope in your word.

Help us to turn from all false ways,

and keep instead the commandments of you, our God.

Uphold us according to your promise, that we may live,
and let us not be put to shame in our hope.

Hold us up, that we may be safe

and have regard for your statutes continually.

For we know we will one day stand before you and give an account,

and so, with that in mind, we ask you to help us now to attend to your word.

Grant this in Jesus's name. Amen.

[Based on Psalm 119:114-117, 120]

Introduction

So Jesus here is speaking about the spiritual tendencies of the Pharisees in his day. But as he does, he exposes several tendencies we might see in our own lives as well.

We talked a few weeks ago about the Pharisees' misuse of tradition. Then we talked about their misunderstanding of spiritual uncleanness. This morning we will look at their twisting of the callings and purposes of God, seen in the concrete example Jesus turns to in verses 10-13.

And so, as we look at this passage, we will consider three things:

- First, we will see the problem Jesus identifies,
- Second, the contrasting visions he is exposing,
- And third, the calling he is placing on us.

So: the problem, the vision, and the calling.

The Problem

So first, what is the problem that Jesus identifies here?

And as we consider our text, the problem that emerges is that we are often tempted to shirk our calling from God to pursue callings that look more virtuous to others and feel much easier for us.

Let me say that again. The problem that Jesus identifies here is that we are often tempted to shirk our calling from God to pursue callings that look more virtuous to others and feel much easier for us.

And we need to see that first in our text, and then in our lives.

In the Text

So first, how do we see this problem in the text?

Jesus identifies the problem with how the Pharisees were carrying out the practice of “Corban.” “Corban” is from the Hebrew word that means “offering” – meaning an offering made to God, a concept which is obviously a good thing in itself. But the Pharisees had developed it beyond the Scriptures into something more problematic. [Edwards, 210]

What we see here is that the Pharisees had developed a teaching not found in the Bible, where a person promised their inheritance to the temple system, and once they did, that property could not be sold for human purposes – which included that it could not be used to support your elderly parents. [Horne, 114]

In response, Jesus points out that the commandments of God in the Bible call on children to honor their parents – and this includes the responsibility of children to provide for their elderly parents who are incapable of providing for themselves. But instead of doing that, as God calls them to, the Pharisees are devoting that property or wealth to God through the temple. [Leithart, 46]

Now, there are a few things to note about this practice.

The first is that this action encouraged by the Pharisees looked super-pious to others. It looked like they were going over-and-above what God required – like they were among the spiritual elite. So it had the outward appearance of superior virtue. [Leithart, 46]

But second, this super-spiritual-looking act was actually an act of disobedience. Because in the very act, they were refusing to do what God had actually called them to do. [Leithart, 46] Note that Jesus sees material provision for one’s elderly parents, when they are in need, not as a nice thing to do, or a possible extension of the fifth commandment, but as obviously inherent in it.

Third, we need to see that this super-spiritual-looking act of disobedience was actually easier than what God had really called them to, not harder. And this is because Corban was a form of deferred giving, while meeting the material needs of one’s elderly parents would require immediate giving.

You see, once property was declared to be Corban, it would go to the temple at the time of the owner’s death, and it could no long be spent on human needs (like meeting the material needs of the owner’s parents), but the owner still retained control over the property and the ability to make personal use of it for the rest of his life. And so it was much easier to declare your property Corban, and committed to God after you died, than to actually sacrificially give of your wealth right now, to care for your parents. [Edwards, 210; DeHoog, 772]

Fourth and finally, we see that the Pharisees not only did this sort of thing themselves, but they encouraged and pressured others to do it too. They not only practiced this kind of thing, and

rewarded others with praise when they did it, but they tried to make it difficult or impossible for someone who had done this to really repent of it. As Jesus says in verse 12, once someone had declared property Corban, the Pharisees would “no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother.” The ancient historian Josephus documents the efforts made to make such reassignment of dedicated property to human needs very difficult for people. [Edwards, 210]

And so the Pharisees not only did this themselves, but they encouraged others to do it, and even tried to keep them trapped in such a decision, in violation of God’s word. And remember, the Pharisees weren’t the pagans. They were seen as the spiritual elite among religious conservatives at the time.

And so, taken together, Jesus is here, pointing out the ways that we may be tempted to shirk our calling from God, in order to pursue callings that look more virtuous to others, and feel much easier for us. And we may reward others for doing the same.

That’s the problem Jesus exposes in our text.

In Our Lives

And as he does, we need to consider how we might see this pattern in our own lives.

And in verse thirteen Jesus encourages us to consider this pattern in a range of ways – not just when it comes to elderly parents with financial needs – but in a range of callings God gives us. After all, he says in verse thirteen that the Pharisees do “many such things” according to this pattern.

So how do we tend to shirk our callings from God, in order to pursue callings that look more virtuous to others, and feel much easier for us?

And I would suggest that sometimes we do that within one area of life, and other times we do that between two different spheres of life.

Here’s what I mean ...

Within the Same Sphere of Life

First, this problem Jesus identifies might show up within one area of our lives.

In one area of life, we may shirk our actual calling from God, and do something instead that looks more virtuous to others, and feels much easier for us.

This is similar to the tendency Jesus identified in Matthew 6, when we value praise and recognition from other people more than praise and recognition from God. And there are many ways we might fall into this temptation.

For one thing, we might fall into this temptation when it comes to our role in the church.

We may be tempted to serve the church in ways that put us up in front of people, and that gets their attention – in ways that are visible to others – rather than serving in humble, sacrificial, and unseen ways. We might do this by the sort of roles we seek: up-front, decision-making roles, rather than behind-the-scene serving roles. But other times we do this by finding ways to unnecessarily draw attention to the work we have been doing for the church, so that our unseen acts are seen by more people.

So, we might do this with our role in the church.

But we also might fall into this temptation when it comes to how we raise our children.

And we see this when our focus in raising our children is on superficial things other people will see, rather than on our deeper callings in discipling our children's hearts, which will often go unseen by people around us.

We might be tempted to put our primary emphasis on our children's outward behavior. Or we might be tempted to put our top emphasis on our children's external achievements. But in either case we will be tempted to pay much less attention to the state of their hearts, to our relationship with them, and to their relationship with the Lord.

Now I'm not saying that external obedience or achievements aren't important, any more than Jesus was saying that religious offerings weren't important. But in a similar way, we may be tempted to attend to these external things with our children, in a way that neglects or even dodges our deeper calling from God to know and shepherd our children's hearts ... which is often more difficult, and less rewarded by others in the short-term.

When our children are externally obedient or outwardly achieving, we quickly receive praise from others. When we do the work to know their hearts, and connect with them there in a way that leads them to more deeply know and love the Lord ... few people around us will notice as much ... at least in the moment.

But as J.C. Ryle points out, it is this deeper, loving, and relational heart-work that is our calling as Christian parents. That is difficult, and often thankless work in the short-run. And so, it's not uncommon for us to be tempted to make our own comfort, or the esteem of others, our chief concern, which will lead us to wander from our true calling, and resort to emphasizing external obedience through threats and fear alone. [Ryle, 4-6]

In this way, we can fall into the pattern of the Pharisees with our parenting.

And we can fall into a version of this pattern when it comes to our marriages too.

Ordinarily, a healthy Christian marriage between two fallen human beings requires hard work and support from others. That may mean the difficult calling to work through issues in our marriage

with our spouse. And it may mean seeking help for our marriage from others, in a way that makes us feel vulnerable. That is difficult. But it is what the Lord often calls us to.

But instead, we often prefer to put our efforts into avoiding difficult conversations with our spouse, and projecting a perfect marriage to the people around us. That often feels much easier, and it may gain us praise from others as well. We look so happy and shiny on Sunday morning. And people praise things that are happy and shiny.

But when we embrace that, we embrace the pattern of the Pharisees for our marriage.

Still, in other ways, we might fall into this problematic pattern in how we approach our career – our vocation.

The Lord has called many of us to work out in the world in one form or another.

There, we can be tempted to care more about appearing to be competent and superior to others in our work than we care about actually fulfilling our calling and responsibilities in our work. And so we cut corners, or play to appearances, rather than focusing on doing the work we are actually called to do, because focusing on appearances can often earn us the esteem of others, while being a lot less work for us.

Within each of these spheres of life, we can see ways that we may be tempted to shirk our calling from God, in order to pursue callings that look more virtuous to others, and feel much easier for us.

As you consider your own life, where do you see that temptation? Where do you see ways that you have given into it?

Between Spheres of Life

But as Jesus points out, we can also fall into this pattern in our relationship between different spheres of life.

In the example Jesus gives in Mark 7, the pattern is seen in how the Pharisees relate the sphere of their family life to the sphere of their church life – between the calling to care for their elderly parents, and the calling to give to the ministry of the church.

And again, Jesus points out in verse thirteen that this same pattern can show up in our lives in many different ways.

We may be tempted to do this by pursuing success in our career in ways that neglect our calling to our family.

Here, in the name of how important our work out in the world is, we may neglect the Lord's calling on us to love our spouse and our children well – the calling to give them our time, our affection,

and our personal care. This can be especially tempting when our work is a source of praise and esteem for us, and when our tasks at work feel less daunting to us than the relational work we are called to at home.

Other times we can fall into this pattern by pursuing success in our parenting in ways that neglect our calling to our spouse.

Parenting ordinarily must take significant attention within any marriage. What I mean here is when we become so consumed with the task of parenting, that we truly neglect our calling to love our husband or wife. And soon a rift emerges. And we can start to become nothing more than childcare co-workers with our spouse. [Carder, 71-72]

In the short term, such a single-minded focus on the children can feel easier for some than navigating the difficulties of our relationship with our spouse ... and our children's success can earn us the praise of so many people. But in the long-run it can be devastating for a marriage.

Still other times, we can be tempted to fall into this pattern by pursuing success in church ministry, while neglecting our calling to our family.

I remember speaking with a man (who grew up far away from here), whose father was a pastor. And he described how in his family growing up, he felt like his primary role, along with his siblings and his mother, was for them all to prop up his father, and support him, so that he could do the important work of ministry in the church. He had no real sense of his father caring for him. But he instead internalized that he, as a son, was there to support his father in the work of church ministry, which was much more important than their family life together. His father had actually cast aside his calling to love and support his family well, in order to devote himself almost exclusively to ministry in the church – a calling that seemed to accrue for him more praise and recognition than anything at home did.

We could go on with examples, but before we end our list, we should be careful not to neglect the very example Jesus gives us here. Because we can also be tempted to pursue success in other, outward callings, in a way that neglects our calling to care for our aging parents.

Note again that Jesus sees material provision for one's elderly parents not as just a nice thing to do, or a possible extension of the fifth commandment, but as obviously inherent in the commandment, and a part of the Lord's calling on us. [Leithart, *Ten Commandments*, 69]

The Apostle Paul, re-affirms this, when, in the context of talking about the care of an elderly parent, he says: "if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." [1 Timothy 5:8]

And yet ... few people get much praise for withdrawing from other engagements to care for an aging parent. And such work can be difficult and draining. And so we can be tempted to neglect it, and instead do things that feel easier and gain us more praise from others.

In a whole range of ways, whether it's within the same sphere of life, or across different spheres of life, what we see – what Jesus points out in this text – is that we are often tempted to shirk our actual calling from God, in order to do something instead that looks more virtuous to others, and feels much easier for us.

That's the first thing we see here.

The Vision

The second thing we need to see here, is the contrasting visions for success that Jesus is exposing as he identifies this problem.

These tendencies – the temptations and the patterns – are not just isolated acts we may or may not commit. Rather, at root, they are about two contrasting visions for what success in life really looks like.

One is from the Pharisees, and the other is from God.

And these two visions for success in life are not just battling between the Church and the unbelieving world, but they are also often battling within the Church, and also within each one of our hearts.

And these two visions contrast in a number of ways.

First, the Pharisees vision of success is earthly, while Jesus's vision for success is heavenly. The Pharisaical vision for success is all about what can be seen here on earth: both the praise given by other human beings on earth, and also whatever is most comfortable here on earth. But Jesus's vision for success is heavenly. It's not concerned first with what people think of us, but what God thinks of us. It's not first focused on earthly esteem, but heavenly esteem. And it's not aimed first at earthly comforts or rewards, but heavenly comforts and rewards.

Second, the Pharisees' vision of success is temporal, while Jesus's vision for success is eternal. The esteem of other people fades quickly, and in the best case scenario, it is still lost completely at death. But Jesus' vision for success is eternal. It is esteem with God, which is actually the one thing we can surely take from this life and into the next. Esteem with God lasts where all human esteem perishes.

Third, the Pharisees' vision of success is flimsy, where Jesus's vision for success is sturdy. Earthly esteem is easily lost. We have the approval of others one moment. We can lose it the next. People are fickle. But God is not fickle. His love is sturdy and reliable. And so his esteem can be counted on when we have it through Christ. He will not impulsively change his mind about us, or lose interest in us.

Finally, the Pharisees vision of success is by works, where Jesus's vision of success for us is by grace. For the Pharisees, success is always something we must achieve, or earn, or grasp at, by

what we do. It depends on us. Which means it can also be lost by us. But in Jesus's offer in the gospel, both our standing with God and, in a sense, our achievements before God, come by grace.

First, the favor of God is always, at root, a gift given by grace alone through the gospel. While acceptance with the world must be earned, acceptance with God is a gift given to all who place their trust in Jesus Christ.

But then with that, our callings, our duties, and even our growth and achievements, are gracious gifts as well. And I don't mean by that that they don't take work from us – they may take a lot of work from us. But they are still gifts the Lord gives to us. He gives us the difficult callings, which require us to do hard things [Ephesians 2:10]. He gives us the willingness to be faithful in doing what he has called us to do. He helps us along the way, comforting us, encouraging us, empowering us to be faithful. Even our achievements in Christ are a gift.

And so, in contrast with the world's vision of success, Jesus sets before us a vision of success that is heavenly, eternal, sturdy, and a gift.

That's the second thing we need to consider here.

The Calling

And then, third and finally, Jesus calls us to live according to that heavenly vision. He calls us to reject the Pharisaical vision of success, and rearrange our lives around his heavenly vision of success, by doing with the Lord has called us to do. That will mean concrete changes in our lives.

This starts, of course, by looking to him. Christ must be the root of this change in our lives. We must care more about his approval than the approval of the people around us. And we must find our rest in our relationship with God more than we find it in worldly ease. So we must start by looking to the Lord.

And then, once we do that, we need to begin making concrete changes in our lives.

And often, one major help the Lord gives us as we try to do that is to help us look to others, who have done it before us. As the Apostle Paul reminds us, imitating others can be a key way to follow Christ faithfully.

Can you think of such examples, who may be a help to you?

I can think of a few examples.

I think of a pastor and blogger, years ago, who became well known for his blog that attacked other pastors whom he deemed to be deficient in their theology or their ministries. The blog gained quite a following. The author's name was well-known in many PCA circles.

Then one day, the pastor announced he would stop adding new posts to the blog. A little later, the older posts and the blog as a whole were removed from the internet. Soon after that, I heard from

one of the pastors that this blogging pastor had attacked, that the blogging pastor had reached out to him to apologize. And when he did, he not only apologized for the ways he had spoken of this other pastor, but he confessed the ways he had neglected his calling to minister to the church he served at and had instead devoted himself to online criticism ... because such online critiques got him more attention and praise than the quite, and ordinary work of serving in the church did. But the Lord helped him see what he was doing. And the Lord helped him repent.

He got less earthly attention after he made that change in his life. He mostly disappeared from the minds of many online readers. But he grew in the kind of success that is heavenly, eternal, and rooted in the gospel.

Such an example might feel a bit obvious, or heavy-handed. But there are other, more complex ones as well.

I think of Henri Nouwen. After writing several well-received and popular books about the Christian life, and spending years teaching at institutions like the University of Notre Dame, Yale Divinity School, and Harvard Divinity School, Nouwen realized that his ministry had become less about following Jesus, and more about receiving the approval and praise of others – more about proving over and over how relevant and important he was. And so, in a shock to many, Nouwen took his ministry out of the halls of hallowed and well-respected academic institutions, and he moved into a Christian care center and community where he would minister to and live with adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As Nouwen explains in his book *In the Name of Jesus*, this change was shaped in large part by the question Jesus asks Peter in John 21, where he says to him: “Do you love me?”

Nouwen writes of this question:

“We have to hear that question as being central to all of our Christian ministry because it is the question that can allow us to be, at the same time, irrelevant [in the eyes of the world] and truly self-confident.

[...]

“The question is not: How many people take you seriously? How much are you going to accomplish? Can you show some results? But: Are you in love with Jesus? [...] Do you know the incarnate God?” [Nouwen, 36-37]

Nouwen made a choice on where he could best serve Christ, rooted in reflection and a difficult decision.

But often, such callings are not carefully discerned by us, so much as they are thrust upon us.

Andrew Wilson is a very gifted theologian, author, teacher, and pastor. In a book he wrote with his wife, he talks about the sense of destiny he felt, to do something great in the world, to be a prominent part of God’s work and the expansion of God’s kingdom, as he used his gifts in big and public ways.

And then his two young children were both diagnosed with severe regressive autism.

When this happened, he writes of himself and his wife: “Suddenly, the future we had imagined – saving the world through preaching, writing, advocacy, intervention, and traveling around the globe – was completely reconfigured.” They had to rethink what was possible for their lives if they were to care properly for their children. [Wilson, 13, 46-47]

The work the Lord was calling them to, by giving them two children with significant special needs, was work that would be mostly unseen by the world around them. It wouldn’t earn them accolades or awards. But they had to come to grips with the reality that God had called them to a different pattern of life than what they had been thinking of. If they were going to be faithful to the Lord’s calling on their lives, then their lives would be harder, and in the eyes of the world, they would be less accomplished and less highly esteemed. But this was what Jesus wanted from them. And what could be more important than that?

Or consider Robertson McQuilkin. McQuilkin was the president of Columbia Bible College and Seminary. He had been a missionary to Japan for 12 years, where he and his wife planted five churches, and he had served as interim president of Japan Christian College. They then returned to the United States where McQuilkin became president of Columbia Bible College and Seminary. Under his leadership, enrollment at the school doubled, and they founded two Christian radio stations. Things were going great.

Then his wife was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s. And so, in 1990, eight years short of retirement, he resigned from his position, to care for her full-time.

He was urged by some Christians not to resign ... after all, the work he was doing for the seminary and Bible college was so important, and he was so gifted for it. But McQuilkin had no doubts about the Lord’s calling on his life. His wife was mostly happy when he was with her, and mostly distressed when he was absent. She needed him. And so that was his calling.

He wrote:

“When the time came, the decision was firm. It took no great calculation. It was a matter of integrity. Had I not promised, 42 years before, ‘in sickness and in health . . . till death do us part’? He went on: “This was no grim duty to which I stoically resigned, however. It was only fair. She had, after all, cared for me for almost four decades with marvelous devotion; now it was my turn. And such a partner she was! If I took care of her for 40 years, I would never be out of her debt.” [Quoted in Zylstra]

“However,” he added, “there’s also much more. It’s not that I *have* to. It’s that I *get* to. I love her very dearly. [...] It’s a great honor to care for such a wonderful person.” [McQuilkin]

In such a life we see faithfulness to the Lord’s calling, even when it’s harder than the alternative ... and even when it means less recognition and praise in the eyes of the world.

Looking on such examples can be a great help to us.

But the thing is ... we need not look far away to find such examples.

We can see them closer to home as well, if we have eyes to see them, and a willingness to look more closely.

We have, for example, members here among us, who have made real sacrifices, and given up on other plans or ambitions to care for their aging parents, fulfilling the very commandment Jesus pointed the Pharisees to, here in Mark 7.

We have members of our church who have made sacrifices and given up on other ambitions to care properly for their children with special needs.

We have members who have been vulnerable with others about their marital struggles, in order to seek help, and heal their marriage, and love their spouse more faithfully.

We have members here who have sacrificed ambitions they had for their career, in order to be faithful to the Lord's calling on them towards their children or their spouse or others the Lord has placed in their lives.

And we have members who have sacrificed all kinds of different self-serving desires, for ease and accolades, in order to fulfill the Lord's calling on them to love others well.

Examples of such things abound here.

Do you see them?

Or maybe the better question to ask is: Who are you looking to as your models?

Who do you admire, and look to, for a vision of success in life?

Does it tend to be those who are showy? Those who trumpet their superiority? Those who seek and achieve earthly esteem more than heavenly esteem? Is that the kind of person who you tend to look to as an example to imitate – a life to admire?

Or do you make an effort to look to those who are living, or have lived, lives of quiet faithfulness and love? Those who seem unconcerned with the praise or approval of men and women, but deeply concerned with the praise and approval of God? Those who quietly pursue the callings God has given them, in their homes, in their vocations, in the church? Those willing to look mediocre or disappointing in the eyes of others, if that's what it takes to pursue the calling God has given them? Do you have people like that that you look to as your example of success in life? Because that's the kind of Christian Jesus is calling you to look to and imitate.

Finding them may take a bit more effort because they won't be promoting themselves. But they are around. If you're looking for the right things, you can find them. And you can observe them. You can even ask them for their input on your life.

Living out such faithfulness is difficult, to be sure. But it is possible. And the Lord does not leave us to ourselves in it. He will help us, both by his Holy Spirit, and through his holy saints.

Conclusion

Jesus, in our text, redefines what success is for us.

Let us hear what he has to tell us.

Let us honestly assess our own lives and our own hearts.

And then, with his help, and confident in his love for us in the gospel, let us devote ourselves to quiet, faithful service in the callings he has given us – no matter how unglamorous they may be in the eyes of the world.

For he sees us.

And in the end, it is only his assessment that matters for eternity.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

- Bayer, Hans. Introduction and notes to Mark in *The ESV Study Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.
- Carder, Dave, with Duncan Jaenicke. *Torn Asunder: Recovering from an Extramarital Affair*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008]
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- Wright, N.T. *Mark for Everyone*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.
- Zylstra, Sarah Eekhoff. “Died: Robertson McQuilkin, College President Praised for Alzheimer’s Resignation” *Christianity Today*. June 2, 2016. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2016/june/died-robertson-mcquilkin-columbia-president-alzheimers-ciu.html>

Note: In my preaching I often cite and draw from a range of sources, which includes material from Christians within my theological tradition, Christians outside my theological tradition (in keeping with our church’s core value of “Reformed Catholicity”), and also (following the Apostle Paul’s example in Acts 17) non-Christians who are well outside of Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy. And so, when I cite an author or a source, that citation should not be understood or construed as me necessarily agreeing with, endorsing, or recommending to others anything else from that author or source, except for what I explicitly say I agree with, endorse, or recommend. When engaging with different materials and thinkers, all Christians must exercise wisdom and discernment to determine what is helpful, appropriate, and edifying for each person, taking into account their current needs, wisdom, and spiritual maturity.