

I was reading an article this week from *Alive to Thrive* entitled "Influence of Worldly Values: Christian verses Worldly Values," and what I read was fascinating. Here is what the article said,

"Unfortunately, many professing believers don't see how God's values differ from those of the world in which we live. On a very general level, we can say that Christian values emphasize the importance of the invisible, the intangible, the spiritual, and the eternal, whereas the world tends to major in things that are material, measurable, temporal, and advantageous to one's own interests. But the rift goes even deeper than this. Ultimately, the difference lies in the question of authority. The Bible asserts that God sets the standard about what's real and true and lasting; the worldly perspective says that each of us gets to make up our own standards."

"Really," I thought, "do people really not see how God's values are different from those of the world?"

The article continues by offering a comparison of values and asking you to consider which more accurately describes your beliefs.

- What guides your sense of reality? Divine commandments or personal agenda?
- How do you explain creation? God's purpose and design or random?
- Are you created "in the image of God" or does humanity create itself?
- Is the value of life found in God or is the value of life as it relates to you?
- Does God help you be who and what you are, or do you choose your own way?
- Is God's approval what matters most or is social approval what is most important?
- Is love for God and others paramount or do profit and self-interest come first?

Following this comparison of values, the article poses the main question: "How do our values influence our daily lives?"

Interesting, right? So, in all seriousness, how do your values influence your daily life?

This is a great question and one I think we could all be asking ourselves. Why not look in the mirror and ask the question? Many of us might say we don't like reflection questions like this; we don't like to be put on the spot. However, I think it is a good practice if for no other reason and purpose than for us to gain affirmation that we are indeed living the way God intended. Not all reflection or processes of discernment require change and transformation. Sometimes, when we spend time looking in the mirror, we see exactly what we hope to see and like to see.

This of course means that sometimes we don't too. It is when we don't that, we are then faced with the ultimate follow up questions, "What do I do now? Do I need to shift my ways? What happens if I don't shift my ways? How hard is it going to be for me to let go of what I need I need to let go and grasp on to what I need to grasp on to?"

I found this article and question helpful in trying to wrap my head around what the psalmist is talking about in Psalm 19. The context of Psalm 19 tells us about God's Word (Will) being revealed in Nature (1-6) and Law (7-14). The first 6 verses look outward and speak about nature. Nature is the creation of God given to us as a revelation of God's glory. One of the ways we can know who God is and what God is about is by looking at the essence of nature all around us. God tells us a lot about Godself through the trees and flowers and sun and seasons: the innate beauty, majesty, cycles, and intricate details. Verses 7 to 14 turn inward and speak about the law. The law is a gift from God given to us to help us reveal the glory of God in the way we live and move and have our being. God knows that we, as God's children, also have the ability to reveal who God is through who we are and what we do. The law serves as God's guide and litmus test for us to live by so we can be witnesses of God and reveal God's glory.

As I read the psalm, the words "of the Lord" continued in repetition and began to jump off the page. I immediately began to connect the nature or value of something, like something being made of pure gold or silver, or is the food we feed our dogs byproduct meal or fresh meats and veggies.

Before we are tempted to shrug it off and make any notion that it doesn't matter, I think we all know there is a difference in substance. The difference matters when it comes to whether you can rely on it, bet your life on it, dependability, sustainability. Is it good for you? Will it make you sick or harm someone else?

If you have the choice to have something that is inferior, rotten, not good, and perishable or have something that is ultimately the best, nourishing, strengthening, and eternal, which would you choose?

What I think the psalmist is trying to say is that whatever is "of the Lord" is the best choice. Anything that is "of the Lord" is the ultimate. Anything that is "of the Lord" is the best. Anything that is "of the Lord" is eternal, dependable, sustainable, reliable. One can build true life on all that is "of the Lord."

Once again, the example the psalmist uses is God's law. The psalmist declares:

the *law* "of the Lord" is perfect... reviving the soul... This suggests the law of anyone or anything else other than the Lord is not perfect and will not revive the soul. Unfortunately, this includes some of our adopted and adapted laws in the federal and state governments.

the *decrees* “of the Lord” are sure... making wise the simple... This suggests decrees of any other nature other than the Lord cannot be relied upon and therefore, are foolish.

the *precepts* “of the Lord” are right... rejoicing the heart... This suggests precepts of any other nature other than the Lord are wrong for us and will lead us into trouble and heartache. If not immediately, at some point.

the *commandment* “of the Lord” is clear... enlightening the eyes... This suggests the commandments from anyone or anything else other than the Lord are muddy and will be like looking through a dirty, foggy, tinted lens. Who wants to look at life and live life through a dirty, foggy, tinted lens when you can look through a clean and clear lens?

the *fear* “of the Lord” is pure... enduring forever... This suggests our reverence and awe of God is to never cease. We aren't to be afraid of God and God's law. We are to honor and revere it with pure hearts and minds our whole lives long.

the *ordinances* “of the Lord” are true... and righteous altogether... This suggests the judgments of anyone else other than Lord are inferior and likely false in comparison to the Lord, for God alone is righteousness. God sees us. God knows us. And because God cares about us and loves us, God will always act in righteousness toward us. We can't always say this about people. We rarely can say this about people.

In our soul and spirit, we desire that which is dependable, that which is perfect, that which is sure, that which is right, that which is clear, that which is pure, that which is true, that which is “of the Lord”- more than we long for gold and riches (which is saying a lot), more than our taste buds drool over the sight of our favorite desserts (and we all know what those cravings can cause us to do).

Then why do we follow, or give substance to, or allow control over us, to things that are inferior, rotten, not good, and perishable? To say because we are human is not a good enough excuse. To say that we choose less than because we are human cannot be our excuse! We know better, don't we? Of course, we do. We live it out in other choices whenever we have the opportunity; when we have the opportunity and choice of type of car we drive, restaurant we go to, furniture in our homes, clothes we wear, business we work for, lawyer or doctor we trust, vacation spot, golf course we play, seat on an airplane. Whenever we can, and have the opportunity, we choose the best. The excuse of not choosing God's will and way because of our humanity needs to be running out. God can see right through it.

All that is “of the Lord” is the best! Are we choosing the Lord? Are we choosing the Lord's way? Are we choosing the Lord's will?

**1 John 2:15-17**

**Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of the Lord abides forever.**

**Romans 12:2**

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