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TRAINING FOR GUYS

“I believe God has made me the way I am, and so I have a right to do what I feel is right for me.”

That’s a summary of a statement made by a “famous Christian” recently, as they spoke about why they were no longer accepting a traditional view of a piece of Christian teaching. I don’t want to be more specific than that about either who the person is or what they were talking about - you probably know, but it doesn’t matter. I don’t want this to be an attack on them, or even specifically about the issue they were raising. It’s the statement as summarised above that this article is about.

It is a statement that has little to do with what the Bible teaches, and a lot to do with the western mindset that prevails today. It’s about ME, and what I want. This has permeated into Christian thinking so much that the person in question said it and said too “I’m a theologian so I know what I am talking about”. Yet they have missed the mark on what the Bible says by a wide margin. (Again, this is not an attack on the person. It’s someone who once had coffee and croissants in my living room, and I care about what they are going through. They have been in a long struggle and need love and support from other Christians, as do all brothers or sisters who might say things that are controversial. This particular person has been attacked by Christians for what they have said, not loved.)

Let’s take the opening premise first: *I believe God has made me the way I am.* No! When God created the first man and the first woman He pronounced all His creation ‘very good’ (Genesis 1:31). But that was not to last. Creation fell out of harmony with God when

Adam and Eve disobeyed and broke the relationship they had with Him. From that time since humanity - and all creation - has been in a bondage to decay (Romans 8:21). All have become corrupt (Psalm 14:3).



The whole point of the salvation story is that we are no longer perfect images of God, but need to be redeemed, repaired, restored. How? Through what Jesus has done for us on the cross, of course, but then also in *receiving* that by *dying* to self and *rising* to new life in Jesus. *And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.* (Galatians 5:24, KJV). It’s not enough to say “this is what I am like, God loves me, so it’s ok”. 2 Corinthians 4:7 says *we have this treasure in jars of clay.*

We’re not polished gold, shining in our own right. But God wants to fill us with Himself (He is the treasure referred to in that verse).

Here are a couple of verses from the Psalms (KJV):

Psalms 34:18 - The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

Psalms 51:17 - The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

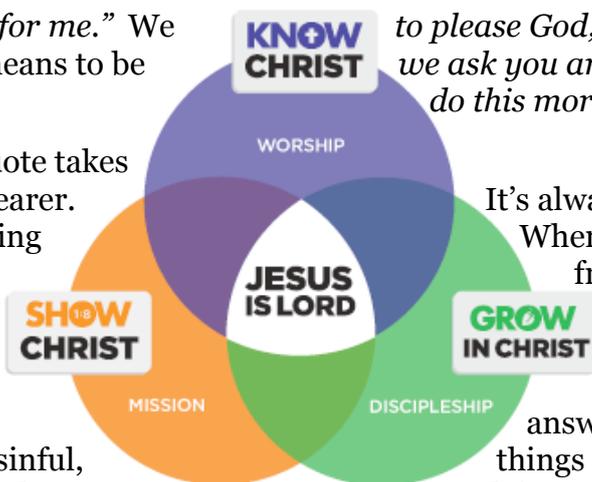
Compare the feel of those verses with the statement we started with: *“I believe God has made me the way I am, and so I have a right*

to do what I feel is right for me.” We need to relearn what it means to be contrite!

The second half of the quote takes us away from God, not nearer. We should always be asking “How can I get nearer to Jesus?” or “How can I bring Jesus more glory?”. These questions re-focus us on Him. We recognise who we are as sinful, fallen, broken people but then want to see Him made clearer, to be more in His presence.

Then it is no longer doing what *I* feel is right, but it becomes living to please Him, whatever the cost to ourselves. 1 Thessalonians 4:1 says (NIV): *we instructed you how to live in order*

to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.



It's always about Him, not about us. Whenever you hear yourself, or a friend, saying “it's my right to do this” come back to the question: “How can I bring Jesus more glory?”. For each of us, the answer to that will involve sacrificing things we feel we were ‘made to be like or do’. It will involve hard choices, struggles, pain. Remember the way Jesus faced the cross. He could have said “God made me as I am, and I do not want to be nailed to a cross. He loves me, so He will understand if I don't do it”. But I don't think that's how the story ended. Don't let it be the way your story ends either.

“Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.”
The Westminster Shorter Catechism

After a Gap Year, I sensed at this summer's Momentum camp that God was telling me to have another go at this. Not yet committing to every week - it depends to some extent on people asking questions or raising things for discussion. It would be great if discussion happened. Here are the links:

Facebook Group for Christian men to discuss issues and questions, linked from www.tfgministries.org.uk/facebook

Weekly podcast working through a book of the Bible (currently Mark's Gospel) www.tfgministries.org.uk/podcast

Back issues of this 'magazine' also linked for download on the tfgministries site, full index in issue 42.



There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death. Proverbs 14:12

What kind of man was Boaz before he married?

Ruthless