

Quotes on Pragmatism from “With A Shepherd’s Heart” by John R. Sittema, pps.66-69.

Pragmatism: “A philosophical system or movement stressing practical consequences and values as standards by which concepts are to be analyzed and their validity determined” (Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary). Charles Colson calls it *utilitarian individualism*, the system whereby individuals make moral judgments by rationally calculating what will multiply their pleasures and diminish any pain.

Pragmatism means first you determine whether an act seems practical, whether its consequences bring you pleasure or pain, and by that process you determine what is right or wrong. Have an unplanned child in your womb? First determine whether the consequences of that pregnancy “work out” practically. If not, it is not wrong to abort the child. Locked into a marriage relationship you don’t like? If staying in a marriage brings you pain rather than pleasure, if it does not bring the desired outcomes, divorce is not wrong. In fact, it may be the best choice among the available options.

Before you lament such logic as unbiblical, remember that this is the world’s way. This is the way the soap operas and the sitcoms on TV resolve their character’s problems. This is the way of Hollywood, the way of your neighbors, the way of folks at work...And the world’s way is penetrating the church. The fang of the wolf has bitten deeply into the flesh of the sheep of the Good Shepherd. The church in North America, for all her talk about values, for all her cry for a return to old-fashioned morality, has been more influenced than influential. George Gallup’s terse phrase, used to describe life in America today, is eerily accurate; “religion up, morality down.” Despite record numbers claiming to be Christian, a diminishing percentage believe their religion to have a direct bearing on the way they make moral decisions.

Part of the difficulty of dealing with pragmatism is that it has a close cousin who is so nice; everyone likes her. Her name is “practical.” How can anyone oppose “practical”?...But being *practical* isn’t the same as operating from a commitment to *pragmatism*. They are not really close relatives. Pragmatism changes moral values, it doesn’t seek to apply in an efficient manner existing values that have been shaped by Biblical truth...

God’s word is eternal. Its standards do not change. His glory is what we must seek; our immediate pleasure and comfort are not the standards of right and wrong. His law determines right and wrong, and life lived by His standards brings joy, comfort and contentment. To make moral choices merely by analyzing the potential for pleasure or pain is to play into the devil’s hand.”

Take a look at the foundation for moral choices that God gave His people, Israel

Deut. 5—8

[1] “And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, ‘Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them. ...[6] He said: ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ‘You shall have no other gods before (*besides*) me...

(and other nine commandments)

...[24] And you said, ‘Behold, the Lord our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire.

...[27] Go near and hear all that the Lord our God will say and speak to us all that the Lord our

God will speak to you, and we will hear and do it.' And the Lord heard your words, when you spoke to me. And the Lord said to me, 'I have heard the words of this people, which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken. Oh that they had such a mind as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever! Go and say to them, "Return to your tents." But you, stand here by me, and I will tell you the whole commandment and the statutes and the rules that you shall teach them, that they may do them in the land that I am giving them to possess.' You shall be careful therefore to do as the Lord your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.

[6:1] Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

"And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, ...—with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, then take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you,

... [17] You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies and his statutes, which he has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may go well with you, and that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers

...[20] "When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the Lord our God has commanded you?' then you shall say to your son, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

...[23] And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us.'

[7:1] "When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you,

...[2] You shall make no covenant with them

...[3] You shall not intermarry with them,

...[4] for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods.

...[6] "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

... [9] Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today.

... [16] And you shall consume all the peoples that the Lord your God will give over to you. Your eye shall not pity them, neither shall you serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you.

...[25] The carved images of their gods you shall burn with fire. You shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them or take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it, for it is an abomination to the Lord your God. And you shall not bring an abominable thing into your house and become devoted to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest and abhor it, for it is devoted to destruction.

[8:1] "The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers. And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

...[5] Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you. So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land,

... [9] a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing,

... [10] And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.

[11] "Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery,

It is interesting that God emphasized fearing Him, keeping His commandments, depending on Him and not forgetting Him as the key to their success in the land He was leading them into. It would be the weapon most effective against not falling prey to the "isms" they would encounter.

Deut 5: 29—“Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep My commandments...”

Fearing the Lord is expressed in keeping His commandments.

Proverbs 9: 10—“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...”

Keeping all He has said is living very wisely.

Matthew 6:33—“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...”

Living very wisely is to seek the kingdom first and His righteousness.

[Vine’s--- “Righteousness (Dikaiosune)—is the character or quality of being right or just; it was formerly spelled ‘rightwiseness,’ which clearly expresses the meaning.]

Seeking His kingdom and His righteousness is seeking whatever conforms to the revealed will of God. This reminds us again of our core scripture for our series on meditation:

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 that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Meditation is essential in renewing our mind which brings transformation.

Meditation is essential in combating pragmatism and learning “rightwiseness”.

Meditation leads to proving what is God’s will.

Pragmatism is centered around self and builds the kingdom of self.

[“If it feels good, do it.”]

God’s kingdom and His righteousness centers around His word and His will, and as those He has chosen out of the kingdom of darkness and made citizens of His kingdom and heirs with Christ, we seek to center our lives around His word and His will. (Meditation is an excellent way to keep what God has said at the center of our thinking.)

Deut. 6: 4-9—“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them for a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates.”

[MacArthur Study Bible note: (This portion of scripture) “known as the *Shema* (Hebrew for “hear”), has become the Jewish confession of faith, recited twice daily by the devout, along with Deut. 11: 13-21 and Numb. 15: 37-41.]

[Identified as the foremost commandment by Christ]

Mark 12: 28-34 —“And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that he answered **wisely**, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

Let us meditate on Deut 6: 4-9 for a moment:

“Hear, O Israel”— *Hear* is a verb that carried the sense of “*obey*,” a hearing that leads to obedience. (Meditation helps us hear, understand and remember what was said.)

“The Lord our God, the Lord is one!”—There is no other God. (It has also been translated, “*the Lord is our God, the Lord alone.*”) There is no other voice for us to heed. There is no other original source of truth to meditate upon.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”—The focus of our purpose, mind, will, emotions, and energy is around Him. Our thoughts, desires, drives, intentions, meditations revolve around Him. To do that, I have to have His words as a continual focus--- meditation enables one to do that.

Josiah was an example of one who responded to God rightwisely.

2 Kings 22 & 23

22: 2—“He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.”

22: 11—“Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes.”

22: 13—“Go, inquire of the Lord for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.”

23: 2—“The king went up to the house of the Lord with all the men of Judah, and with him all the inhabitants of Jerusalem...And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the Lord.”

23: 3—...and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book.”

23: 25 ---“Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all

his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him.”

Many acts verifying Josiah’s conviction, repentance and obedience of heart followed in accordance with the commands.

[See also Acts 19: 18-20 for a NT example of full response to the Word of God—“And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the Word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.”]

“And these words which I command you today shall be in (on) your heart.”

What’s on your heart today? What’s in your heart today? Are they His words or someone else’s?

On what are you meditating? What is making your heart burn? What are you murmuring over and over to yourself? What has your heart so much that you can’t stop thinking and talking about it?

Pro 4: 20-23—“My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.”

Luke 6:45—“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

Our mouth reveals what is dominating our heart. What we speak to ourselves and what we speak to others comes from what we think in our heart. (Again meditation is a way to fill our heart with God’s thoughts instead of ours.)

“You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”

Quotes from “Everyday Talk” by John A Younts, pps. 11-22

“The most powerful personal influence in your child’s life is **everyday talk**...

Everyday talk is talk that happens in the unplanned moments. It happens in casual, unguarded moments. It happens when you are distracted or irritated and would rather not be talking at all. It happens when you receive unexpected news, good or bad. You are always talking or thinking about things—at home or on the way to the mall, when you are driving to work or school, when you are falling asleep (or lying awake), or when you are dragging yourself out of bed in the morning. This is everyday talk.

Deuteronomy 6: 6-7 speaks about a specific type of talk that God wants you to have with your children—everyday talk. God wants your everyday talk to be about Him. God wants you to talk

about His world. God wants you to talk about what He does and how people respond to Him. He wants you to do this when you are at home, when you are out and about, when you relax. His commands are to dominate your thinking and overflow from your heart into the lives of your kids as you walk along life's road. These commands of His are to be in your heart, living there in a rich, full way.

God wants you to repeat His Words over and over. Wherever you are with your children, they should hear about the constant interaction you are having with God and His Word. This is how God's Word will make an impression on your children.

God wants you to look at the world His way...God wants you to use the ordinary events of life to teach your children to know and trust God and His Son.

Your everyday comments are the ones that teach your children most profoundly about your view of God. Your interaction with God in everyday, ordinary, non-church life is the most powerful tool of influence that you have with your children. It communicates what you really believe.

Jesus used everyday talk to train the apostles. In the same way, God wants you to talk to your children about Him all the time. No matter what comes up during your hectic day, He wants you to talk about Him—every day.

We lead busy lives, and all too often lose sight of priorities. We don't take time to meditate...If you don't spend time thinking about God, you won't have much to say about God.

God is everywhere, all the time. He controls everything. If you are aware of His power and presence, if you take even a little time to meditate on Him, your everyday talk will begin to be about God.

Jesus was always with His disciples so that he could influence them. Someone will always be influencing your kids. Someone will always be using the powerful tool of everyday talk to encourage your kids either away from God or toward God.

Paul teaches that bad company, which brings the wrong sort of everyday talk, will attack and weaken good teaching and moral character. Even the "good" programs for children can be "bad company" if they offer an exciting, satisfying world that ignores (or denies) the sovereign God of the Bible. TV, videos, movies, conversations with others, listening to music—these are all sources of everyday talk. Don't fall into the trap of thinking that some influences are neutral—neither good nor bad. If you spend five minutes saying what is right and other influences have their say for three or more hours, what do you think is going to have the biggest impact on your children? Your good words as a parent can be drowned out by the sheer volume of corrupting influences. Anything that doesn't influence your child **for God** is an influence **away from God**. Jesus taught that whoever was not with Him was against Him.

Everyday talk should be given as the most precious of gifts, because it is! Everyday talk will influence your kids either for Satan and his ways or for God and His ways."

(Note—Not only are "when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" good times to teach your children, but also are excellent times to meditate on God's words. There is not better use of time than to fill our mind with His word and then think His thoughts after Him.)

"You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

There is not time to elaborate on these final verses in this lesson but the important thing to notice is how fully the Lord commanded His people to saturate their lives with His words. All of life centered around His words. All of our life should also and meditating on His word is the best way to accomplish filling our whole life with Him and His truth. A life centered on Him and His words will never fall prey to “pragmatism.”

The solution to every “ism” is Him, the Word of God.

How important it is that we fill our hearts with His word.

Ps 119: 11—“Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”

Numbers 15:37-41—“Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments...that you may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God.”