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Foolish Disregard

Greg Chandler

To dismiss God from our decisions is a most foolish thing to do. The reality of God is the most massive truth we'll ever encounter, and the most consequential. It is folly to omit this truth from our thinking, as if we expected it to move out of our way. Some individuals disregard God by adopting the intellectual position that He does not exist. These have thought the matter through and come to the conclusion that there is no God. In their conduct, they may live as if there were a God and may even adhere to a certain spirituality, but their position, at least philosophically, is that a personal God does not exist. If God does exist, such a denial is obviously unwise. But many of us disregard Him in a way that is no less foolish. We do this when we simply conduct our lives without taking God into serious account. This is a more practical kind of atheism. We pay lip service to a God who "perhaps" exists, but we believe that this God can be safely set aside in the actual conduct of our day-to-day affairs. He has no real impact on our lives.

In Psalm 14:1, it is this kind of "fool" who is described. He says "There is no God" not so much by his dubious philosophy, as by his disobedient lifestyle. There is a sense in which this kind of atheism is more arrogant than any other. In Psalm 10, for example, we are shown how PRESUMPTUOUS it is to disregard God: "The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts" (v.4). "He has said in his heart, 'I shall not be moved; I shall never be in adversity'" (v.6). "He has said in his heart, 'God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see'" (v.11).

"He has said in his heart, 'You will not require an account'" (v.13). When we live in this manner, we trivialize God in the most blasphemous way. Unlike the atheist who believes there is no God to be dealt with, we believe that we don't really have to deal with the God who does exist. We think that, for all practical purposes, He can be ignored. But if God is our Creator, our disregard only shows us to be foolish. It does nothing to diminish Him.

Misunderstandings about Church Discipline

- by Greg Gwin

Several attempts had been made to restore an erring Christian, but every effort had failed. Finally, it was clear that disciplinary action could not be avoided. And, what was the response of this wayward member? She wrote (and I am not making this up!): "Go ahead and dis-member me, if you feel you have to."

Many people misunderstand the subject of church discipline. Some of the erroneous ideas are:

'Christians withdraw from people because they lack a proper level of love.' Actually just the opposite is true. This action is taken out of a deep love for the eternal soul of one who has fallen away from faithfully serving the Lord. We know that if they are not alerted to their lost condition, they will suffer an eternity in Hell. We love them too much to let this happen without a strong effort to save them.

'The church does this because they just don't care enough for weak members.' Again, this is simply not true. We care so much that we are willing to sacrifice our friendly social contact with a brother or sister who has sinned and refuses to repent. We are hoping that by doing this they will be motivated to come back to the Lord. We know that this is ultimately the most important thing.

'It just seems like the elders and others in the church enjoy doing this sort of thing.' Nothing could be further from the truth. This action, when it becomes necessary, is hard and it hurts to have to do it. It would be much easier to just 'look the other way' and let the sinful one continue on the destructive path to eternal ruin. But, because we care, and out of deep love for their soul, we do this even though it is a very difficult thing.

'I just think this is an incredibly mean and hateful thing to do.' In reality it would be mean and hateful if we did not do this in an all-out effort to restore a fallen brother or sister. When nothing else has worked, this is a final push to save their soul. So, no, it's not mean or hateful – it is a sign of real devotion to the well being of the one who has slipped away.

'Those Christians who would do something like that just have a 'holier-than-thou' attitude.' Well, no, that's not right either. This action is taken "in the spirit of meekness" and we are always "considering ourselves lest we also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). We understand that we can also be "overtaken in a fault" and therefore we do this – and would hope that others would care enough for us to do the same if we needed such help.

So, we won't 'dis-member' anyone, but we will take the proper steps to administer church discipline when it is needed. It's what the New Testament teaches us to do, and it's what love demands.

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Truthful Excuses

Robert F. Turner

An excuse need not be a lie. It is because, factor, or circumstance that frees from blame or releases from obligation. Many excuses are both truthful and legitimate; some are outright lies; while others may be very truthful, yet reveal a most unbecoming character in the maker.

When someone explains his absence from worship with, "We had visitors," this need not be a lie. It may be truth — which tells us that this person regards social amenities as being more important than worship.

"No one is perfect!" How very very true. So — there can be no standards, no right or wrong? There can be no ideals to which we can press, nor should we urge such elevated goals upon others? Can't we see that the imperfection of man is the very reason for recognizing *our* failures as such, and helping one another to get up and try again?

"Many people do it," to which we all must agree. Does that make it the will of God? Many people think that man made God in his own image, and accept a situation-ethics standard; but it can not be demonstrated that such a philosophy has ever elevated mankind, or promoted a stable society. This is a poor substitute for faith in God and individual character.

"There are hypocrites in the church," — and the world has none?? Do you think that using a hypocrite as your excuse makes you a better man? And how is it that one is able to see the **truth** with reference to hypocrisy in others, and be blinded to the same in themselves? (Matt. 7:1-5)

"But I meant well!" This also may be the truth. It commends, to some extent; but it remains a commendation only as our honest heart leads us to further consider God's truth, and make corrections accordingly.

A radio commercial of some years back has one man excusing himself (?) from worship with, "Things are so unsettled these days. There is so little time. Why, the whole world may be blown apart at any moment."

And the reply was, **"That's right!"**

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