

# Simple Wisdom for Confusing Times

Cleveland Radio personality Mike Trivisano is known for saying “I’m living in a world I don’t understand.” Many of us honestly probably feel that way. When a person, or a culture become unmoored from truth – nothing good happens.

I want to talk this morning about some hot-button topics, and present the simple beauty of God’s truth in those situations. Because although people and times may change and present a reality that makes no sense to us, our wisdom comes from God and is unshakeable.

## Wisdom from Heaven

James 3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

Our lives should be marked by good deeds and the humility that comes from heavenly wisdom. Wisdom which is pure, full of mercy, sincere. It is the kind of wisdom that quietly and consistently produces good fruit. We need this today in the world!

## Contentious Issues

There are so many things right now that people are pushing against the boundaries and norms which have been around for centuries. Dangerous ideas are presented as new wisdom and to hold onto old ideas is simply outdated. Yet as we see the chaos created by this new wisdom I think many realize that there are simple truths that we must return to. I’m going to do a quick brush through 3 topics:

- Human sexuality
- Racism
- Socialism

Now I’m not going to spend a lot of time on any particular issue, but that is somewhat intentional because I want to drive home the idea that **we shouldn’t let the world over-complicate what God has made simple. We can be confidently calm, resting in God’s truth.**

### Issue 1 – Human Sexuality

We live in an “anything goes” culture, and once you throw off restraint it becomes an ever increasingly destructive race to see who can be more outlandish. There is no more crazed and abused topic today than human sexuality. Some now say that there are a range of genders, and it is an arbitrary choice that each person has to make.

I won't go into great detail here, but clearly the madness is being seen even by people who are not biblically minded.

Choose your pronouns...

Choose your bathroom...

Choose your sports team...

But we have adults who are so afraid of going against culture that they bow to the pressure that they should let their own children have physically destructive surgery. We used to be a society that would scoff and shake our heads at "backwards cultures" that practice such things as sex change operations but now we make it sound like it is enlightenment. A generation of women fought for girl's sports to get equal funding as boy's sports in high-school and college. Now you have a generation that says a male should be allowed to compete against a female because he has arbitrarily chosen to be one.

We ignore simple science, biology, and millennia of common sense because we are so enlightened. But what does God say today?

Gen 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

...

31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Some simple truths – let them wash over your mind like a cleansing shower!

1. God made us MALE and FEMALE – the two together representing the image of the living God.
2. God made MALE and FEMALE to rule together in harmony (not competition) over creation.
3. What God made was VERY GOOD.

The beautiful simplicity and complexity of what God has made is wonderful! It certainly is no coincidence that the devil attacks so hard against this area as it is fundamental to who we are as image bearers of God.

I remember a young girl who approached me at youth group a few years back and asked me "What if I think I might want to be a boy." This poisonous idea had been introduced into her mind that maybe there was a cosmic mistake and she didn't land in the right body. It is a very sad and very destructive idea.

What is our peace-loving response to this madness?

1. Be confident that the unchanging word of God can be trusted.

Ps 119:89 Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.

2. Let your anger be directed at Satan, not people.
3. Don't be afraid to speak the truth in love.

We shouldn't give one inch to these horribly destructive ideas as we teach our children, as we preach the gospel, or as we work in the world. When confronted with these things we should pray for compassion and strength. The most difficult of these situations is when a child comes to a parent and says they are gay, or they want to be the opposite gender, or they just don't know what they are.

Parents need to realize this is the time we live in and it might happen. The brokenness of the world seeps into all of our lives. We can't hide from it and certainly it is so pervasive that even our best attempts to control the influences in our children's lives can only last for so long.

### **Realize that confusion is a key weapon of the enemy.**

- Make them doubt who they are.
- Make them question how God created them.
- Make them hate themselves as they are.
- Make them think SEXUAL identity IS their identity when really or identity is about who we are in Christ.

It is truly heart-breaking – but the most *unloving* thing we could ever do for a child or anyone in this position of confusion is to affirm them in their confusion. Some would say you love them without judging, and that is true. We need to lovingly point people to Christ. A person needs to come to Christ to figure out who they are, not figure out who they are so they can come to Christ. But our truth that we speak, especially to those we have opportunity to speak to must be the clear message of God.

That young girl who asked me, which I don't know if it really was a genuine question or just wanting to sound edgy, but I gently and lovingly told her that God made her exactly how he intended to. If she was confused it wasn't about God having made a mistake, but rather what was needed was her learning to know who God is and then coming to see the beauty of God's plans and purposes in her life.

### **Issue 2 - Racism**

Never has so much progress made by a nation to overcome a social issue been turned into a reason for such division. You have the majority of America agreeing on topics that somehow become wedge issues.

There is a growing trend of voluntary segregation on college campuses, from dorms and organizations for specific ethnic groups all the way to separate graduation ceremonies. What ever happened to the idea of "e pluribus unum" – from many, one.

Certainly, there are many examples still today a people who hold racist views. Who look at someone different and hold them in disregard. Yes, policing has had its issues, but even there, accountability is at an all time high. The reality is that all of this separation and angst comes at a time in our nation's history where race equality and opportunity is as good as it has ever been. Could it be improved? Of course!

Are there still destructive remnants of past racism that linger? Yes. But some of the claims these days are outrageous and certainly, in my opinion, do more harm than good.

*What is God's simple wisdom?*

Acts 17: 26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. 27 God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

**We are all children of God** – all of us related back to one man Adam. That which divides us is so much less than that which binds us together.

Now recognize that racism isn't a new problem and it isn't a uniquely American problem. It is a sin problem that has been around since the tower of Babel. People have tended to isolate in clusters of people like themselves and view with suspicion or hatred toward those different than us.

**So how should we respond to our current tide of racial turmoil?**

1. Realize that only in Christ can we find true unity.
2. Go out of your way to make connections with people different from yourself.
3. Seek to understand another person's point of view. Their experiences and perceptions are different, so try and understand where they are coming from. Watch movies or read books that describe some of the ugly history of this country. Yes – Americans did some awful things.
4. Seek justice and mercy for everyone. When one part suffers we all suffer.

Now some are now saying that because of past history of slavery and racism that reparations should be paid to the descendants of slaves or those who suffered unjust treatment. This idea is plagued with legal, moral, logical, and practical problems.

*Legal* – how do you determine who pays and who receives?

*Logical* – if slavery was really the reason for American wealth creation, why were the richest regions in the US those where slavery was absent?

*Practical* – what about people like me whose American roots started post civil war? What about the black descendants of black slave traders?

*Moral* – is it right for a person to have to pay for the sins of someone who came before?

So what is God's simple wisdom?

Exodus 18:20 The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them.

Reparations from a generation to pay back for the sins of another generation is not a biblical concept. We should, however, be involved in trying to help alleviate the lingering issues which may, at least in part, be a legacy of past racism. The biggest one I see is our failing education system. But this is far

from a simple fix. I believe that freedom in education should be a right that we fight for, so that no child is forced to attend a failing school because of where they live.

But again, realize how much good one person can do for another person. Reaching into another's circumstance is the most powerful thing we can do to bridge gaps and make a difference.

## **Socialism**

How about the resurgence of socialism as a means of government? It is truly sad that such ideas get any kind of traction when an understanding of history proves socialism to be the most dangerous, oppressive, and dehumanizing system of government known to man. In every living example it becomes tyranny, destroys nations, and leads to great human suffering. The freshest example is in Venezuela, which went from being a place with much wealth to a place of destruction that people are fleeing.

- **Socialism** is "an economic system based upon governmental or communal ownership of the means of production and distribution of goods and services."<sup>1</sup>
- **Communism** is "the Marxist ideal of a classless and stateless utopian society in which all property is commonly owned and each person is paid according to his or her abilities and needs."

Many will point to the bible and Jesus as proponents of socialist ideas. Is this true?

Acts 2:44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

Acts 4:32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.<sup>33</sup> With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all<sup>34</sup> that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales<sup>35</sup> and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

*Sounds* like socialism, everything in common, selling their possessions to give to anyone who had need.

But let's look deeper.

First, there are strong biblical principles about private property, personal economic activity, and the rewards and punishments of working hard, or not.

Second, the acts described in Acts were voluntary. Prompted by the Holy Spirit during a time of great growth in the early church. The actions were not mandated nor is there any indication that this was being directly encouraged by the apostles. It was a spirit of generosity that was always preached by Jesus and the apostles, but even that implies it belongs to the person, and they give it away.

Third, even in the context of what was going on Peter reaffirms the ideas of personal property and ownership as he is rebuking the about to die Ananias

Acts 5: 4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal?

Fourth, Paul sums up a godly perspective on wealth in 1 Tim 6:17.

1 Tim 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Fifth, Paul talks about those who don't want to work in 2 Thess

2 Thess 3:10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.

So please understand that socialism/communism are not biblical forms of government. While the bible calls on believers to be generous, to share and help lift others out of their need, it does not support the idea of coercive wealth distribution, which is really theft and seizing of private property.

God's word teaches us that it is good for a person to work to support himself and his family. To learn diligence and faithfulness. It also teaches us that we will always have rich and poor among us. To not be jealous of someone better off than yourself or neglectful of those in need.

### **Dealing with Division**

The final thing I want to share about today is regarding how do we live and interact in this crazy, confusing time. I've already shared several thoughts – so I'll give just one more. Tying back into my opening scripture, the apostle James instructed us to live in humility, to show good deeds of a good life.

James 3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

1. Be confident in the Truth – it doesn't change
2. Be gentle and kind to those God is calling
3. Do good to those around you and share Christ

The church and the people of God are called for such a time as this. We are the ones who bring light to the darkness.

