

Well, this is number 252 of Whitestone episodes and if you been with all those podcast episodes in sequence, you know some of the overarching themes and pillars of the podcast. And one of those key themes and pillars is that of *God and His Kingdom*—as detailed in the Bible and revealed in Kingdom history. This subject is often the very best resource for understanding the highest competencies necessary for success in businesses and nonprofits! And churches, for that matter! The Kingdom is built on the foundation of Christ and Him crucified and will outlast and outshine every other enterprise in history!

So, of course, we constantly look to the Bible and Kingdom history for gleanings that can help us in all the various areas of running enterprises! And those gleanings come from cycles of research-wisdom-action that are proven. And you know that these episodes often weave together profound truths from the Bible.

But here's the thing. A number of key foundational Bible truths by which we can live very fruitfully—now and for eternity—are quite straightforward. What we have to do is find those truths, take them to heart as wisdom, and act upon them. That's how the Bible is designed and who it's designed for—the average person who's sincere. But oftentimes people like to assume that the keys to the Bible can be told only by the smartest people. And that's simply not true! Fact is, some of the folks who think Bible keys must be unraveled by the smartest people often unsurprisingly count themselves among the smartest people!

Let me tell you a bit where I'm coming from. I was raised in farming and ranching country on the high plains of eastern Colorado. The people who live there are very down to earth, and wisdom that is fruitfully actionable most often comes in short, clearly spoken sentences that don't need any real interpretation.

Then, when I started taking college courses, the best professors were the ones who spoke clearly and directly, those who kept the simple “simple” while still making the more complex issues clear. Then I got into a humanities class, and the professor teaching it changed my life! I don't remember that entertaining professor's name, but the session I tend to recall best is when he spoke on assigned poems. The line on one poem was very clear to a reader, something akin to “the sky is blue.” And the professor spent maybe 45 minutes explaining that the poet really didn't actually mean to communicate “the sky is blue”—rather, the poet in reality meant something far different, and he, the professor, was here to tell us students what the poet *really* meant. *Well, then...why didn't the poet write something different than “the sky is blue?”*

Now, many teachers are sincere and direct and quite accurate. But, you see, no matter how straightforward the message, many others want to be mediators between the message and its recipient—you know, the “smart” mediator who you supposedly *absolutely* need to understand the message! But a mediating teacher often has a key bias...maybe a religious tradition...or a pet intellectual viewpoint...or perhaps the bias is that they simply must be a key influencer appointed to correct folks—even when the message is quite simple and clear. Those mediators are often doing what I call *working very hard to misunderstand the basics*...and doing so to secure influence and supposed superiority over the message's recipient. But whether the motive is pure or not, mediators like these *work very hard to misunderstand the basics* to effect their personal viewpoint. And that's what changed my life in my humanities class. From that day forward, when I discern that a mediator's approach is to do that, there's no sense wasting my time. Thank you, my professor of humanities and poetry, for that extremely valuable lesson!

Now that's what some—and I do say “some”—theologians and teachers and pastors tend to do, too—as well as some philosophers who claim expertise in talking about God. Sorry if that's news to you, but you need to hear it! The reason you can know that's true is that theologians and other truly serious Christians *often disagree with each other on some basic yet crucial truths. And that has always been true!* Remember Jesus vs. the Pharisees? Paul vs. Peter? Paul vs. the Judaizers? So, every Christian today who's working to navigate Christianity well should know there are many voices in conflict with one another—sometimes directly and other times indirectly—as to the content and relative proportion of what they choose to teach!

Of course, the first rule of real life for believers, then, is to read the Bible, the Word of God, for themselves! And to do that using a reliable translation of the Bible into their language. And to do that mindful that

God has given us much of what we need to thrive in this life and eternally in direct, straightforward words. Now, don't get me wrong: there is a measure of Scripture that requires significant digging to gain context and real understanding. And it is super helpful to have theologians, teachers, and pastors to feed us in that regard. But the simple truth is, the Christian leaders who teach the basics of Scripture clearly and also unpack and communicate more difficult passages well is a small percentage of the total. *Work to find 'em!*

Now let's cut to the chase by looking at some key, clear Bible verses that, if you believe and follow them as they are plainly communicated with all of your being, you will assuredly be doing your Father's will! Here they are, with a comment or two following each as to some mediators' strongly-held viewpoints.

Romans 1:19-20: "For what can be known about God is plain to [all], because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So [all] are without excuse." But some philosophers work very hard to testify that God doesn't exist! That's because they've hardened their hearts to basics. *But the plain truth is, God says His existence is made plain to every person.*

1 Timothy 2:3-4: "This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." But some believe that a small, preselected group is the entirety of who God has saved—and they speak or write lengthy discussions assuring folks that's true. *But the plain truth is, God simply, straightforwardly desires all people to be saved and come to that truth!*

John 3:16-17: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." Yes, "God so loved the world" ...*but some believe that Jesus came for that small, preselected group of people, not everyone in the world. The plain truth is, Jesus was given as a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:6)—yes, He died for all who would believe!*

Mark 12:30-31: "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 then, Matthew 5:44: "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..." *The plain truth is, a believer's mission every day is to love God and all humanity, including enemies—not to be crowded out by the thinking and writing of those elevating their culture wars and their politics of condemnation above God's love.*

1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 11b: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures...so we preach and so you believed." *The plain truth is, the message of first importance, then and now, is always the Gospel.* But nowadays, an unwieldy emphasis as to Christian life by some with huge influence is on social issues, politics, and culture wars...clearly placing more public emphasis on this-world power than the salvific gospel message of the Kingdom of God. In contrast to that, at the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus taught his last-recorded priority to His disciples...

Acts 1:6-8: "So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.'" Many Christians today have an inordinate focus on politics. *The plain truth is, Jesus told His disciples again to instead witness to the end of the earth.*

These plain truths in just a few verses can help lead to a very fruitful Christian life! But *some work very hard to misunderstand these basics* to lesser or wrong priorities. Look for this phenomenon in every realm, from churches to workplaces. 2 Timothy 4:3-4 says this: "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths." Yeah.

## *A&A: Application & Action*

1. Have you developed a Spirit-directed pattern of discarding theologies of highly educated people who misunderstand basics of the Bible that you know are true? Discuss.
2. Name specific cultural or political priorities of Christians in your nation that are lesser or wrong when compared to the basics of the New Testament? Discuss.
3. Have you engaged in debates with other Christians about theological differences that each side felt very strongly about...and those debates bore no fruit? Do you consider this type of activity to be an unwise use of your time and effort? Or did you consider doing that to be an exercise of iron sharpening iron? Discuss.