

Thinking in God's Categories: 1 - Spiritual



Agreeing With God (Part 9)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue with our theme for the week: Agreeing with God.

In my previous talks I've suggested that there are four main areas in which our ways and thoughts need to be brought into line with those of God if we are to agree with God. The four main areas I've outlined are first, objectives; second, priorities; third, attitudes; and fourth, categories. I believe in all these areas our thoughts have to be brought into line with those of God and the only instrument that can do that is the Word of God received by faith into our hearts and minds and I've already shared at some length on various of these areas.

In the area of objectives I've shared what I believe to be two primary objectives of God. First, His own glory and satisfaction, and second, excellence. And, of course, excellence is needed for God's glory and satisfaction. And the ultimate purpose of everything in the universe is to bring glory to God and to satisfy God. There is no higher objective than that.

I've also shared two main priorities of God. The first is the coming of God's kingdom to earth. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

The second is the eternal before the temporal. God never sacrifices the eternal to the temporal. He always works in our lives for our eternal good. I've also shared two characteristic attitudes of God. First, His attention to detail—that He always checks the small before the great. "He that is faithful in little is faithful in much. And second, in His attitudes, mercy combined with severity or sternness. And if we only look at God's mercy and ignore His severity, we have an incomplete and inaccurate and deceptive picture of God.

Today I'm going to move on to the fourth main area: that of categories—that is, the way we classify things, or group them together.

First, I must point out that the way we categorize things or persons has a tremendous influence on how we relate to them or deal with them. If we categorize them one way, we'll have a negative attitude. If we categorize them another way, we'll have a positive attitude to the same thing or person.

Take as an example some ways we commonly categorize persons. For instance, the political way. A person is a Democrat or a Republican. Or if you're thinking in terms of Communist philosophy he's a worker or a capitalist. If you think in religious categories, the main religious category in Christianity is Catholic or Protestant. You may think in racial categories. Then the possible categories would be white, black, Jew, Gentile, and so on.

Now let me give you a very brief and simple example of how categories make a difference. Let's suppose I'm white, a Democrat and a Catholic, which is not totally true in my case. Anyhow, this is just an example. I am white, a Democrat and a Catholic. I meet a man who is black, a democrat, and a Catholic. If I relate to him on a racial basis, there's a barrier between us. But if I relate to the same man on a religious or political basis, I identify with him. And so the basis on which I relate to him determines my attitude toward him. And there are of course countless other ways we could illustrate that. The conclusion then is that the way that we categorize people or things determines our attitude to them and how we relate to them.

Now what I want to say is, the same is true of God. If we want to agree with God, we must learn to think in God's categories. And that is a revolution because by nature our categories are very different from those of God. With God, the most important categories are spiritual or moral.

In my talk today I'll be giving you an example of a spiritual category that is decisive with God. Tomorrow I'll give you an example of some moral categories.

The basic, spiritual category, I believe, in Scripture, is this: It's faith or unbelief. Now most people today with the current world outlook don't think in those terms. They say, "He's a nice man," or "He's a clever man," or "He's a sincere man." But they're not talking in terms of faith or unbelief. But that I believe is God's basic view of the human race. He categorizes the human race in a different way from that which most of us would do. Let me give you some clear and simple examples of the categorization of God into these two categories: faith, or unbelief—the person who believes and the person who does not believe.

My first example is taken from John 3, verse 18, where John the Baptist is speaking about our relationship with Jesus and he says this:

> "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (NKJ)

There's the basic category. Believing, which sets us free from condemnation; failing to believe, which bring us under condemnation. So God doesn't categorize people primarily by race or by color or even by religious denomination. His basic category is much more simple—he who believes, or he who does not believe.

Again, in John 3:36:

> "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (NKJ)

There again, we have two, simple, basic categories—he who believes and he has everlasting life; he who does not believe who's under the wrath of God. This applies not merely to believing in the person of Jesus, but in the message of the gospel. When Jesus commissioned His apostles to go forth at the end of Mark's Gospel, with the gospel message to all creation, He told them this in Mark 16, verses 15 through 16:

> "He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 'He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.'" (NKJ)

That's the dividing line between salvation and condemnation—he who believes, he who does not believe.

I want to apply now this principle of belief versus unbelief in a simple, practical area of daily life—that is marriage. In Second Corinthians, chapter 6, verses 14 through 16, Paul says to Christians:

> "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? [That's a name for Satan.] Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?" (NKJ)

So you see, Paul is carrying on with the same basic classification or categorization—a believer or an unbeliever. And he says in choosing your mate, this is the basic issue. It's not primarily his race or his income level or whatever it may be, but it is—is he a believer or an unbeliever.

Let's suppose a young lady is being courted by a young man and she tries to weigh up the desirability of accepting him as her husband. So she says he's nice looking, he's got a good job, he's got a good income, he's got a nice car, he knows how to take me out and entertain me, but I'm a Christian. Is that enough? The Bible says no. The basic issue is—is he a believer or unbeliever. All the rest is secondary. Now if that young lady goes by natural categories, she may marry that man and it may prove a disaster. But if she thinks in terms of God's categories, she'd probably refrain from marrying him and save herself many heartaches later in life. We have to understand that faith centers primarily in the will, not in the intellect or emotions. It is a decision and so we can decide to think in God's categories—faith or unbelief.

In Hebrews 10, verses 35 through 39, the writer gives a very solemn warning:

> "Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what he has promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. [That's the return of the Lord.] But my righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul." (NASB)

Notice, that in that warning there are just two possibilities, and only two. We go on believing to salvation or preservation—we shrink back to destruction. And every one who's become a believer is then in that category—either to go on believing to full salvation—to shrink back to destruction. You see, if you face the issues in your life on that basis, you'll make the right decisions. But if you begin to think in terms of finance, or your own pleasure, or comfort, or the opinions of the world, you may make a very wrong and fatal decision. So you must learn to think in God's basic categories of believing or not believing.

Our time is up for today but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll continue with this theme. I'll be giving you Examples of God's Moral Categories.

Radio Program

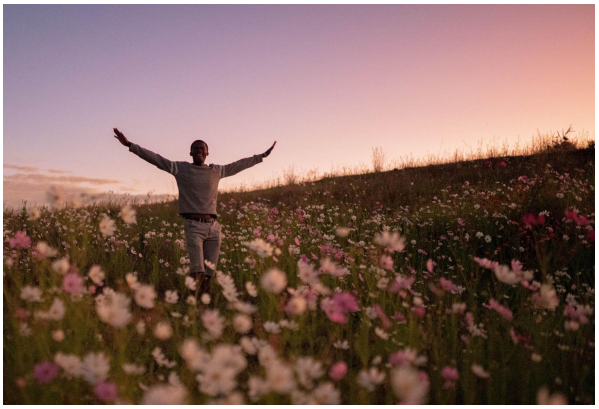
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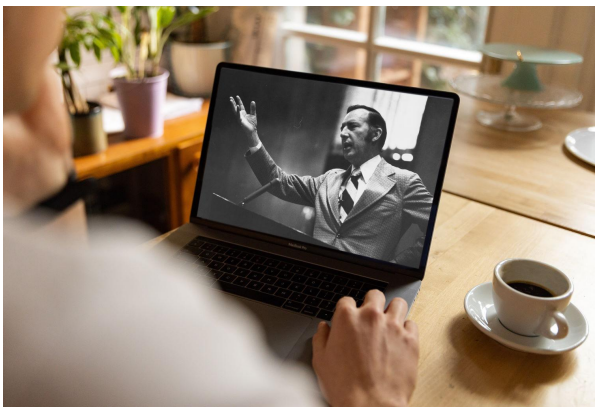
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