



Everything **in** Moderation?



"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways" - Isaiah 55:8

Jump Start # 1243

Isaiah 55:8-9 “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

We wrap up our series on “trying to figure God out.” We’ve looked at several Biblical examples of people who couldn’t understand why God did what He did. Habakkuk couldn’t understand why God would use the wicked Babylonians. Job’s friends had never seen the righteous suffer. Naaman was certain that the prophet of God would come and wave his arms and heal him in a dramatic fashion. Eve thought God didn’t mean what He said. The list could go on. There are others that illustrate exactly what our passage is saying today, God is not like us. His thoughts, His ways, His plans are higher and better than ours.

All of this leads to understanding that we cannot use ourselves as an indication of what God likes or dislikes. God is not like us. We cannot use culture, society, or even the past to explain, understand or build our faith upon. When we do that, we manufacture and shape God into what He is not. We make Him more like us than we become like Him. God is not like us. Our thoughts level off. Our ideas run dry. Our expectations are limited and easy. God’s ways and thoughts are higher. We tend to sympathize and find reasons for our short comings. We don’t expect nor demand too much from each other. God is not like that. The sacrifice of Cain was rejected. The strange fire of Nadab and Ahibu insulted God. The lip service of the Pharisees did nothing for God or for them. God’s ways are higher than our ways.

This tells us that the casual spirit of worship, the desire to be innovative & change worship, may appeal to us, but that doesn’t mean it does to God. He’s not like us. This tells us that flirting with the world in immodesty, social drinking, & vulgar language may appeal to us, that doesn’t mean it does to God. God is not like us. Instead of blending in & being like the world, God wants us to be sanctified, holy & separate. Israel was to drive out the nations when they entered the promise land. They failed to do that. They became influenced by those nations. The same is true today, spiritually.

We become influenced by the world about us. Instead of remaining distinct & holy, we tend to blend in. We let our guards down. We don’t see the big deal with things. We look, act, talk & behave like those around us. We want to be “cool” Christians. The books & blogs are saturated with this concept. It’s a good sell. It makes Christianity hip. Mega churches have sold a softened and watered down gospel to the multitudes. Go to church on Sunday and go out drinking on Friday night. Nothing wrong there. What you do at work & what you do in church have no connections. Lie, cheat & steal, if it fits your needs, but be sure & grab your cup of Java & laugh your way through a comedy sketch that is sold as worship. What’s happened? We assume God likes what we like.



We are convinced that God is like us. His ways and our ways are the same. If it works for me, then it must work for Him. The holiness of God, the reverence for the sacred has been lost. We have become convinced that we have figured God out & that He's ok with us doing a little wrong. Moderation has become the fifth gospel in the Bible. Do everything in moderation. Don't drink too much, just in moderation. Don't be too worldly, just in moderation

First, where is moderation taught in the Bible? It's not. Sticking one toe in the ocean of wrong isn't better than jumping in completely. They are both wrong. Moderation is the gospel of seeing God like us. Don't go overboard, be moderate. Did Paul preach that? Is that what Jesus told Zaccheus? Was that the message to Martha when she was so bothered about her sister not serving? Never. Never is moderation the answer. Never is moderation the theme. Never is moderation preached. Never.

Second, what in the world does moderation mean? Who has the guidelines? Who determines? For instance, I've heard this argument, the Bible condemns drunkenness. You can't get drunk. It doesn't say anything about a little drinking. (Actually, it does. Read 1 Peter 4:3). So, the thought goes, drink in moderation. Where is that taught? Why not drink right up to the line of drunkenness. If being drunk is wrong, the line right before it must be right. The preachers of moderation wouldn't agree with that. If five beers puts a guy under, then four & a half must be ok. He's not drunk. Now, the preachers of moderation would frown on that. However, a couple of beers would be ok. Moderation.

Now, you take two different people, one who grew up in a Christian family & never drank. The other person, worldly as he was, becomes a Christian. For the first guy, two drinks is affecting him. He's not used to it. The other guy can handle four pretty easily. He's had a life time of drinking. Now what is moderation? Who is to say to the first guy, after two, you shouldn't? Are we making up the rules here? Are we thinking that God is like us? Now consider this. A guy goes to Colorado for vacation.

Smoking pot is legal there. The sermon on moderation convinces him that he can smoke pot as long as he doesn't get stoned. Really? The big toe in the ocean of wrong doesn't work. God's ways are not our ways.



Third, moderation doesn't produce powerful Christians. Dabbling in a little wrong here and there, even though in moderation, isn't the substance that grows faith. Alcohol doesn't strengthen marriage. Alcohol doesn't build strong churches. And folks will say, "But Jesus drank wine." Really? Is our knowledge that shallow? Do we not realize that the word WINE in the Bible means everything from the grape still on the vine to what they considered hard liquor. Same word. We have different words. For us, wine is not beer and beer is not bourbon. Different words. They used the same word. So standing behind Jesus because He turned water to wine doesn't at all mean it was alcoholic. There doesn't seem to be much moderation in the wedding feast at Cana when Jesus produced 160 gallons of wine. Maybe our thoughts are not His thoughts. **Continued on the back.**

God wants us to be strong, pure & holy. Dancing with the world doesn't do that. Moderation doesn't do that. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you is what the Ephesians were told. Be led by the Spirit is what the Galatians were told. Don't get drunk, be filled with the Spirit is what Paul wrote. Imitate Christ. Be conformed to His image. Christ lives in me. Christ be formed in you. All those great New Testament passages speak of a distinct course of life. It's obeying God. It's letting God speak through His word. It's not trying to guess God. It's not trying to figure God out. He has shown us who He is.

God declared to Moses, "I Am, that I Am." This is the God we follow, serve & bow down to. A new form of idolatry has taken over our land. It's not a physical stature, but an image in our minds. We've made God to be like us. He's become our buddy. He's one of us. That manufactured image isn't the picture you get from the Bible. My ways are not your ways...

-Roger Shouse

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Times of Service

Sunday Worship: 10 am
Sunday Bible Study: 5 pm
Wednesday Bible Study: 7 pm

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