

January 23, 2022

The View

“Sirs, we wish to see Jesus.”—John 12:21

Welcome Visitors

Our goal at the Folsom church of Christ is to do everything according to God’s word, including respecting its silence. We are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church; we have no earthly “headquarters.” The six elders oversee this church and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily for the benefit of our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don’t understand something, please do not hesitate to ask the preacher or one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God’s word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

**Please fill out a visitor’s card and put it in the collection plate located near the entrance.
We do not solicit donations from visitors. See page 4 for more information.**

Schedule

The Lord’s Day

9:30 AM Bible Classes

Auditorium: A Study of Paul’s Second & Third Journeys

Room 15/16: Raising Faithful Kids

Room 12: Young Adults Class

10:30 AM: Assembly

Preaching Today: Scott Gardner

“Lord, Change My Thinking”

Livestream at 10:30 <https://tinyurl.com/5f2cbm3y>

Bible Class @ 2:00 PM in room 12 on Judges

Bible Class @ 5 PM — A Study of Prayer in the Psalms (Auditorium)

Young Peoples’ Class, 5 PM @ David & Christie Posey’s home

Middle school class: monthly (contact Dan Stegall at 818-209-9810)

There are several on-going Bible classes in the homes of members. Check with David Posey or one of the other elders if you would like to join one of those classes.

Wednesday 7 PM @ Building

Bible classes for all ages

Auditorium: A Study of Paul’s Second & Third Journeys

Room 15/16: Raising Faithful Kids

Room 12: Young Adults Class

The Law of Simplicity

If I understand it correctly, “Occam’s Razor” is a concept that says, essentially, that when faced with competing explanations for the same phenomenon, the simplest is likely the correct one. It’s named after William of Occam (1287-1347) who said that the best explanation of any phenomenon is the one that makes the fewest assumptions. A statement that includes many ‘ifs’ should trigger mental alarm bells.

Occam’s razor is a rule of thumb to suggest which hypothesis is most likely to be true. It doesn’t prove or disprove, it simply leads you down the path that’s most likely to be correct. Of course, ‘simplicity’ is subjective so we might come to different conclusions when faced with a decision between two ideas. But there is value in considering the aim of Occam’s razor in the application of what we learn from the scriptures.

For example, when people raise questions on the topic marriage, from divorce, to remarriage after divorce, to “same-sex” marriage, it’s likely that there many assumptions people are making when discussing these issues. But what is the best, or even the *only* answer to these marriage issues? Jesus said, in answer to the Pharisee’s question about whether a man can divorce his wife for any reason,

“Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” — *Matthew 19:4-6*

“Occam’s razor” seems to say that if we “shave” off all the extraneous assumptions and cultural “adjustments,” then the answer to the question, “*what is a lawful marriage in the eyes of God?*” becomes crystal clear: a lawful marriage is a permanent bond between a biological male and a biological female who have never been married before. No one can debate that this is a lawful marriage, if we take the Bible seriously. Unfortunately, we find it necessary to add the adjective “biological” due to attempts to normalize the idea that there can be more than two genders. That’s an assumption that is not proven and, of course, not endorsed anywhere in God’s word.

There is another, timely, application of Occam’s razor. We should not get sucked into a whirlpool of paranoia after scrolling through WebMD. “You have a headache?” “*Oh no... you might have the Black Death!*” Sure, it’s true that one of the symptoms of the Black Death is a headache but, using Occam’s razor, it’s obviously much more likely that you’re dehydrated or suffering from a common cold. Could that be true of Covid, too?

The general idea behind Occam’s razor is valuable for Bible study because there is a practice among some in which their assumptions are elevated to a place where they alter God’s word. That habit is fatal to a true understanding of the text and unnecessarily complicates things.

The example above, from Matthew 19 (quoting Genesis 1) also answers every question about sexuality: what is “sexual immorality” (Gk., *porneia*)? Clearly, it is any sexual activity outside a lawful marriage, including lust (Matthew 5:27-28). Period.

The Matthew text (with Genesis 1) also deals with every possible question that comes up in the LGBTQ+ category. According to scripture, there are only two genders that are fixed at birth and only a male and female can be involved in a lawful marriage.

There are many valid, sometimes difficult, questions that come up when we are studying the Bible. But one of the main obstacles to understanding scripture is imposing our own 2021 assumptions or our personal feelings onto the text. That gets in the way of understanding scripture correctly. For example, the assumption that you are “poor” if you make less than \$X per year (even though you have a car, two TVs and a subscription to Netflix) will make it virtually impossible to understand the Bible’s teaching about those who are truly poor.

Another example is in how we conduct ourselves in the assemblies of the church. If we ask the question, “what should we do when we assemble?” If we “shave” away all of the assumptions and cultural biases, and just stay with the simple words of the New Testament, what do we come up with? There won’t be any incense, candles, 5-piece rock bands, robes on preachers, choirs, stand-up comedians or elaborate appeals for money in our assemblies. *We will* find prayer, the weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7), singing designed to teach (Ephesians 5:19) and lots of teaching and preaching.

Why do some church leaders make it more complicated than it is? It’s because they *assume* that people in the community desire those things and the *assume* that they should offer what people want. But the question is not, “what do people want when they go to church?” The question is, “what does *God* want when the church gathers?” To that question we can apply the rule that the simple answer, the answer that doesn’t account for assumptions, is the best. When it comes to worshipping God together, we don’t have to assume anything.

There are some flaws in the Occam’s razor concept because it’s just a human idea. However, taken at face value, it makes a lot of sense. It reminds us to be suspicious of any idea that requires jumping through a lot of intellectual hoops or statements based on many unproven assumptions (such as the theory evolution and theories about the age of the earth). Generally, the simple answer is the best.

dp

Culture Update

Slouching Towards Secular

What it is: Self-identified Christians made up only 65 percent of the US population in 2021, according to data published by the Pew Research Center.

Why we need to be paying attention: It's difficult to discern what data like this "means" in terms of what people actually believe or don't believe. The definition of what it means to be a Christian, and the connotations of that association, may have shifted just as much as people's actual convictions over the past two decades. Regardless, the number of individuals who are readily identifying as people of Christian faith does appear to be dropping at an unprecedented level. Take this data point from Pew: In 2007, Christians outnumbered people of no religious affiliation ("nones") by five-to-one, while last year, that number was down to a little over two-to-one. Christianity continues to be the dominant religion in the United States, but a few more years of stats could mean that isn't true anymore. (Consider how they are defining "Christianity.")

[Q. Part of the issue with the above stat is in the definition of "Christianity." Generally, it bears little resemblance to the real thing, as revealed in the New Testament. dp]

Teen Slang

Beware: some of these slang terms date *all the way back to November*, so if you use them now, in mid-January, the kids may laugh at you as a hopeless relic. Teen slang terms tend to have a very short shelf life.

Bugman: A man who loves being part of consumer culture, loves buying the newest technology, and doesn't appear to be ashamed of the part they play in the collective "hive-mind" (hence: he is a bug man). (Ex: "Is Mark Zuckerberg a person, a robot, or the king of the Bugmen?")

iykyk: "if you know, you know," referring to a niche interest or an inside joke. (Ex: "We always order our burgers animal style. iykyk.")

OOMF: "one of my friends" or "one of my followers" on TikTok; meant to call someone out without naming them directly. (Ex: "OOMF has no boundaries in my DMs, and they ask me the most personal questions.")

Yassification: Applying several layers of something that should be good to glam up or make something sound/appear better, even though the result ends up being something cringey or contrived. (Ex: That selfie she thought looked good got completely yassified with all the FaceTune she used.)

Based: foundational; unshakeable; an adjective that has evolved to mean being yourself and not caring what anyone thinks about it. It could be a TikTok comment on a post where someone displays particular confidence or expresses an unpopular opinion without fear of "cancellation," often in a one-word comment. Can also be used sarcastically.

The Other Epidemic

What it is: Sobering new data from the CDC showed that the US reached a grim milestone this year, with opioid overdose deaths topping 100,000.

Why it's getting a lot of attention: There's no doubt that disruptions in addiction services due to the pandemic, combined with an uptick in the use of fentanyl and methamphetamines, contributed to this unspeakable amount of human loss. To put this in perspective, "This year alone the DEA has seized enough fentanyl to provide every member of the U.S. population with a lethal dose." The way forward for a nation gripped by depression, anxiety, pain, and addiction remains murky, at best. Though the public has become more and more aware of the problem, that doesn't mean we are getting closer to social programs that deliver a sustainable solution. It's more important than ever to warn our kids of the dangers of prescription pills and their even less regulated street drug derivatives.

The above entries are from *The Culture Translator* newsletter