



# CANCELLING CULTURE: ESTABLISHING BIBLICAL FILTERS FOR TODAY'S WORLD

Session 4: God Wants Me to Be Happy,  
Doesn't He?

# HOW DO WE DECIDE WHAT TO DO?

- Let's start with some questions:
  1. Who wants to be unhappy and is so committed to it, that they actively make choices to make themselves unhappy?
  2. Who equates unhappiness with God's will?
  3. What is the genuine, normative difference between happiness and joy?

# HOW DO WE DECIDE WHAT TO DO?

- A simple, biblical argument for happiness as a normative decision-making engine:
  1. God made us according to a certain design (Jer. 1:5)
  2. This design includes happiness derived from things that we enjoy doing (Ps. 37:3-4)
  3. It is God's will for us to live according to His design (Jer. 29:11)
  4. Therefore, we must seek to live happy, so that we can live according to God's design.
- Why should we not operate out of the principle of happiness as we walk out our faith?

# MORALISTIC THERAPEUTIC DEISM

- Most normative operational faith in culture is likely closer to MTD than it is biblical Christian faith.
- MTD was defined in 2005 in a book called *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* by sociologist Christian Smith; the book was the result of a research project relating to American teens and faith by the National Study of Youth and Religion.
- MTD is now considered the most common definition for operational theistic faith in the West; its tenants include:
  - A God that exists created and ordered the world and now watches over human life on earth.
  - God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
  - The central goal of life is to be happy and feel good about oneself.
  - God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
  - Good people go to heaven when they die.
- **Point to consider: is the altar that we come to regularly just an expression of MTD?**

# CHRISTIAN BIBLICAL FAITH (OR “WHY HAPPINESS ISN’T EVERYTHING!”)

## 1. Creeds/Orthodoxy

- We are to “follow in His steps” (1 Pet. 2:21)
- The oldest expression of Christian faith include suffering (and suffering well) as an aspect of this
  - Phil 2:5-11- possibly the oldest Christian hymn/creed
  - 2 Tim. 2:8-13- another song/creedal statement
  - Apostle’s Creed- “....suffered under Pontius Pilate...”
- Communion- activity that commemorates death/suffering to be like Him in life (Phil. 3:10)
- Our foundational beliefs and practices are rooted in an acceptance of a life that is not always “happy.”
- Augustine in *City of God* has a chapter (Book XIV, Ch. 25) that includes this idea (changes in the Enlightenment)
- Westminster Confession- “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

# CHRISTIAN BIBLICAL FAITH (OR “WHY HAPPINESS ISN’T EVERYTHING!”)

2. Total Depravity- do we believe it?
  - Augustine (again) in *Confessions*- I am a complete wretch!
  - In *Against Pelagius*- “There is no way that I was good in any respect!” (**Completely** under the power of sin- Rom. 7)
  - Carried through by John Calvin in *The Institutes of Christian Religion*
  - If we are completely depraved, then that means that our desires, the things that we might do in order to be happy, must be suspect as well (even that which we enjoy that is not necessarily sin; “Others can but I cannot!”)

# CHRISTIAN BIBLICAL FAITH (OR “WHY HAPPINESS ISN’T EVERYTHING!”)

3. There’s more to the Bible than just “family!”
- “Family” is a limited and necessarily tainted idea when it comes to God/Christian life...especially when it comes to happiness
  - Other analogies in the Bible are given to help us gain a more complete picture of what it is that God wants for us.
    - Levitical priesthood- 1Pet. 2; Rev. 1
    - Slavery- Rom. 1; *dulos*=“slave”
    - Soldier- 1 Tim. 2
    - Body/members- Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12
  - Note: All these display “Lordship” in terms of absolute and complete obedience...not always “happy” outcomes (Ex. Isa. 6)

# PRACTICING THE CRAFT

- Song is an incredibly powerful tool for helping us to remember what is important to the beliefs that inform our practice. They are often the crossroads where emotion, circumstance, and reason all meet. At your table, pick three of your favorite worship songs and analyze them in light of the Meyers video and your knowledge of MTD. Are there elements of these songs that are problematic in light of these things?