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RON ADAMS





Articles

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DEJA VU (ALL OVER AGAIN)

“On Monday, the tactics were exactly and intelligently handled by [King] James to put the burden of proof on the Puritans. Unless they could show that there was something in scripture **explicitly condemning** the bishops’ administration of confirmation, or the use of the cross in baptism, or of the ring in a wedding service, or kneeling to receive communion, or the wearing of the surplice, or about the institution of episcopacy itself, he would not interfere with the accustomed ceremony or government of the church. That church, for all its abuses, was a comfortable bed in which to set a monarchy.”¹

* * *

The above quotation about King James in 1604 brings to light a position that has been held over and over during religious discussions or debates: “*Unless there is something in scripture that **explicitly condemns (or forbids)** a particular action, there is to be no objection.*”

Today we are hearing once again this sentiment among ministers in various churches, including some church of Christ preachers and elders. It’s not a new argument—it’s old, very old! When scriptural authority cannot be found, it is sought in the silence of the scriptures, or in the obscure recesses of “general commands.”

For a moment, consider how exhaustive the scriptures would be if everything forbidden was explicitly condemned. The Index would be larger than our Bibles. And God would have had to include every device of men that would be conjured up until Christ comes again.

King James is quoted as saying, “We have kept such a revell with the Puritans heir these two days”² after he had dismissed all the Puritan arguments. The Puritans were humbled trying to prove their objections simply because the Bible is not a complete set of “thou shall nots,” but rather a book of facts to believe, commands to obey, and promises to cherish. What specific scripture **explicitly condemned** the Church of England’s actions?

When challenging those who object to innovations with “**where is it explicitly condemned or forbidden?**” objectors will fare no better today.

Why? There is something inherently wrong with the position of King James’ and of those today who find liberty in the silence of scripture. To wit: (1) Authority must be found in what is written in scripture, not what is not written.

(2) Authority based on the silence of the scriptures is an open door that allows anything and everything not explicitly forbidden.

Many of those who champion this view today would object to “confirmation, or the use of the cross in baptism ... or kneeling to receive communion, or the wearing of the surplice [a loose-fitting, white ecclesiastical gown with wide sleeves, worn over a cassock], or about the institution of episcopacy.” But on what grounds? They are not **explicitly forbidden!**

Let’s take the **“unless explicitly forbidden”** position to its logical conclusion. Here’s a sampling of things that are not explicitly condemned: prayer books, creed books, clerical robes, instrumental music, choirs, burning of incense, altars, animal sacrifices, confirmation, baptizing of infants, metropolitan bishops, ad infinitum.

The folly of such thinking becomes evident. The wisdom of “scriptural authority based on what is written” also becomes evident. Don’t be silenced by those who challenge with “Where is it explicitly forbidden?”

¹GOD’S SECRETARIES: THE MAKING OF THE KING JAMES BIBLE by Adam Nicolson, pg 53 (emphasis mine)

²[Ibid, pg 54]

THE LOSERS LIMP

Today we have a generation of men who suffer from “loser’s limp.” Anyone who has competed in sports knows what is meant by “loser’s limp.” It’s what happens when an outfielder misjudges a fly ball and misses the catch, or when a wide receiver drops an easy pass. They fall to the ground and get up limping. The purpose of the limp is to camouflage their failure.¹

All of us know when we fail in our efforts. We know when we fail in job performance, family obligations, or in our actions towards others. We feel the sting of our conscience pricking us. Feelings of guilt rush into our consciousness. Such feelings are troubling and must be dealt with. If we are honest, we will admit to ourselves (and others) that we have fallen short, and with a change of heart determine to correct the problem and determine not to do it again. If we seek to justify our failures, we develop the “loser’s limp” – blaming some influence, force or circumstance.

“I couldn’t because ...” is offered as justification for inaction. “I would have, but ...” is submitted as the cause for shirking responsibilities. “If it wasn’t for ...” is submitted as a defense for failure.

Similarly, people develop the “loser’s limp” when attempting to defend their transgressions, their insensitivity to the needs of others, or their poor attitude toward serving the Lord. They deceive themselves, thinking they are excused or justified. Most of the time such limping is convincing only to the one doing it. Why some buy into such excuses is really unimportant. What is important is that the Lord’s scoffs at such nonsense. *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”* Galatians 6:7-10

The next time we find ourselves falling short in our performance as a Christian, let’s not feign the loser’s limp, but stand upright and accept full responsibility for our actions or inaction. Then, and only then, are we in position to make the needed changes, to receive forgiveness from the Lord, and to have the support and understanding of the brethren.

¹ from the book “No More Excuses” by Tony Evans

MISSION STATEMENT of Christ's Church

To spread the gospel of salvation, effecting the salvation of souls lost in sin; teaching, encouraging, protecting and rebuking members; so that they may persevere to the saving of their souls.

A MISSION STATEMENT IS NECESSARY

Any organization (business, non-profit, church or whatever) needs to have a clear view of who they are and what they are trying to accomplish. Quite often you will see a Mission Statement posted on a wall of a business establishment. (Even if it isn't posted, there usually is one.)

The church has a mission, a mission that must be clear in the minds of the members and overseers. Without such a statement, the church can become busy with everything but the true mission of the church.

ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES

Spread the good news of salvation by any and all Scriptural means.

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

Provide spiritual education and training for members.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. Ephesians 4:11-16

Protect, encourage, exhort, reprove and rebuke the members.

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 2 Timothy 4:2

Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17

GOD'S CORRECTNESS vs. POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

I overheard the following comment about a well-known evangelist, who was holding a "Religious Mission" in San Diego: "I like to listen to him because he doesn't talk about controversial issues that divide us. He talks about love." Avoiding speaking on such issues appeals to many, but it is inconsistent with what the Apostles and early evangelists did. Maybe it's because modern psychology was unheard of then; or maybe they were just unlettered men who didn't know better; or, maybe the Spirit guided them in a politically incorrect way. In any event, if they were still speaking to people today, it would be said of them, "They just don't get it – they are politically incorrect."

Cited by the 'Politically Correct' Police

JOHN

The "Apostle of Love" called some people "liars."

P.C.: He should have given them the benefit of the doubt.

Warned the disciples about not having fellowship with false teachers.

P.C.: He should have been more understanding—realizing that such ostracizing is painful to the one shut out.

Told Gaius that he'd deal with the bad behavior of Diotrephes "when I come."

P.C.: He should have been forgiving, and should have instructed Gaius to be more tolerant.

PAUL

Warned that some followers were in danger of "falling from grace" and being "severed from Christ."

P.C.: He should have stressed the loving and forgiving spirit of God.

Taught that the goddess Diana (Artamus) was nothing, upsetting the Ephesians.

P.C.: He should have been more understanding of their long held veneration of Diana. He should have been aware that beliefs are a personal matter and are sacred to the individual.

Preached that the Greek's wisdom was foolishness in contrast to the wisdom of God, upsetting the Greeks.

P.C.: He should have praised the Greeks for their ability to think and reason. He had no regard for their self-worth.

Confronted Peter face-to-face before all, after Peter had acted improperly.

P.C.: He should have avoided confrontation and been more understanding and forgiving.

Condemned those who were “preaching another gospel.”

P.C.: He should have allowed for some diversity. Not all people think alike.

Believed he had an obligation to preach the “whole counsel of God.”

P.C.: He should have known that such preaching would not be well-received, and turn some followers away.

PETER

Preached that the Jews were responsible for demanding that an innocent Jesus be put to death.

P.C.: He should have left off “blame.” No one likes to be blamed. It makes one feel bad and sad.

Declared that he (and the other apostles) ought to obey God, not man, upsetting the rulers.

P.C.: He should have tried to find some “common ground” through compromise.

Charged men to speak “as the oracles of God.”

P.C.: He should have made allowances for personal interpretation of Scriptures.

JAMES

Chastised those who said but didn't do.

P.C.: He should have understood that many have good intentions and probably have good reasons for not doing.

Charged some members with “spiritual adultery.”

P.C.: He should never have used such strong terminology. He should have been more positive, not negative.

JESUS

Healed on the Sabbath and upset the Jews.

P.C.: He should have done it on another day and avoided the confrontation.

Called scribes and Pharisees “hypocrites,” condemning their false piety.

P.C.: He should have refrained from such condemnation, no one likes to be called names. It hurts one's feelings.

Condemned the scribes and chief priests; called them white-washed tombs.

P.C.: He should have had more respect for the spiritual leaders, even if they were less than perfect.

Criticized the Pharisees and Sadducees, calling them an evil and adulterous generation.

P.C.: He should have known that such a combative spirit only turns off those you are trying to reach.

A WARNING!

"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths."

2 Timothy 4:1-4

THE NOT SO GOOD SHEPHERD

'Feed my sheep'

A shepherd was put in charge of some of his master's sheep. He was given one hundred to watch over. His master warned him to be sure to watch out for the wolves. So day and night he vigilantly watched for any wolf that might try to sneak into the flock. Yes, he was determined not to lose one sheep to the wolves. And he was proud and boasted to other shepherds of his perfect record—not one lost!

Some time later his master came to check on the flock, and the shepherd reported, "not one lost." But his master was perplexed because there were only fifty sheep in the flock. What happened to the other fifty?

"Well," the shepherd said, "there were a few problems."

"What problems?" the master queried.

"Let me explain," said the shepherd. "There were a few times I thought I spotted a wolf in sheep's clothing among the flock (it surely didn't look like the others) so I killed it. Well, it wasn't a wolf after all. You see, when some of the sheep got dirt on them, they didn't look like the others who were clean and white, and I mistook them for a wolf in sheep's clothing. But I can confidently say 'not one sheep was lost to wolves.'"

His master asked, "Surely, you didn't mistakenly kill fifty sheep."

"Oh, no," replied the shepherd.

"Well, what happened to the others that are missing?" inquired the master.

The shepherd replied, "Some of the sheep complained about the lack of good pasture and went off looking for greener pastures. I was sorry to see them go, but it's much quieter without them. Also, when some of the sheep that were 'high maintenance' wandered off. I didn't go after them because I had to protect the flock against the wolves that might devour some of the flock while I was away. Anyway, the workload is much lighter without them."

"So you just let them wander off and didn't go after them?" the incredulous master asked.

"The Lord had a number of followers who turn away, so I guess it's the same today—nothing new under the sun," replied the shepherd matter-of-factly.

"Let me look at the sheep that remain in the flock," demanded the master.

"Okay, but let me warn you, there is another problem, and I am at a loss to explain," replied the shepherd.

The master gasped! “They look terrible, and many of them are near death! Look! Some are actually dead. What happened? You said it definitely wasn’t wolves. Then what could it be? Some kind of disease? Maybe something they ate?”

On closer examination it became apparent that the problem was the sheep were suffering from malnutrition.

The master turned to the shepherd and asked, “What have you been feeding them?”

“Feed them? Listen, I didn’t have time to properly feed them, I was too busy keeping the wolves away. Yes master, I can confidently say ‘not one sheep was lost to wolves.’”

Feed my sheep!

Editor’s Note:

This is not a true story. But I have known some shepherds who failed to properly feed their flock. This is a sobering admonition to all those who have been given charge over some of the Lord’s sheep.

THE SPOT ON THE RUG

“What caused that spot on your rug?” the visitor asked abruptly. The question arrested my train of thought. “Spot? What spot? Oh, that spot!” The question begged for an answer.

I began to recall what happened. It was so long ago I had forgotten it. At the time I was very upset, but over time I had become oblivious to it. How strange it is, that what was so apparent to a visitor was overlooked by me. Seeing it daily, I had come to accept it as part of the permanent setting in the room. I went on to explain the cause of the spot and the reason it had not been removed.

After the visitor left, I began to think about how we often overlook the “spots” in our lives. How strange that we can ignore the obvious.

Sometimes it is to our benefit to disregard the spots; at other times overlooking them can be detrimental. In friendships, we overlook the “spots” in each other’s lives. No one is perfect, and if we demand perfection in our friends we won’t have any. Friendships are built on mutual admiration and trust, not perfection. We love each other in spite of the blemishes (spots). This is beneficial to all concerned.

Our lives often become spotted with problems. If there is nothing within our power to remove them, we must learn to live with such spots. “*Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you*” (1 Peter 5:7) is sound advice from the Lord. We need to learn “*to be content in whatever circumstances I am.*” (Philippians 4:11)

The Apostle Paul had a ‘thorn in the flesh’ (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) that the Lord would not remove. He learned to live with the condition and was a better person because of it. However, when the solution to the problem lies within our power, we must work diligently to remove the spot.

When we overlook our shortcomings and faults, we hurt ourselves. Self examination should be done frequently. Ignoring our faults causes us to become complacent, thereby thwarting the removal of “spots.” We must not be like the Jews of Jesus’ day who were blind to their faults. They could not see their hypocrisy. “*For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I should heal them.*” (Acts 28:27)

Spots! We all have them. Some spots are to be gracefully accepted as part of our lot in life, while others must be removed as soon as possible (while we can still see them). When sin stains our lives, spot removal is necessary.

BE YOUR OWN BOSS

Be Your Own Boss, the advertisement pitch came blaring over the television. It continued with the extolling of the benefits of owning your own business. Not having to answer to a boss again. Doing things the way you think they ought to be done. Being free from the tyranny of “higher-ups.” This message has appeal because it offers freedom, and freedom is a cherished commodity.

Anyone who has decided to be their own boss soon realizes that with all the independence and freedom to control your own business comes the responsibility of making it profitable. This fact was omitted from the commercial—intentionally or unintentionally, you decide. But it is a fact that cannot be ignored. Many an entrepreneur has failed because the weight of responsibility was too heavy to carry.

After thinking about it, the same pitch is being broadcast concerning living. It is being advertised (promoted) “*Be boss of your own life. Don't let others control you life, take charge. Don't let others tell you what to do. Rules, regulations and morals are the 'tyrannical taskmasters' that make life a chore, if not downright miserable. The confining aspect of such 'suffocate' one's free spirit, taking the fun out of life.*” The message is clear: Be free from restrictions. Do your own thing. Be one who “did it my way.” It is your right to be free. Think of it—not answering to anyone for anything anymore.

To be free has great appeal. Any pitch that offers freedom will find eager listeners. But the pitch, like that of owning your own business, leaves out the one important fact: if you are in charge, then you are responsible for what you do with it.

Freedom and responsibility are Siamese twins. To have one you must accept the other. If you are the boss of your business, or the “boss” of your life, you are the responsible party. You are the one who will be held accountable for decisions made and actions taken. As “boss” of your own life, if you hurt others, you are responsible. If you make a mess of your life, you are the one at fault. If your soul is lost, you are the one held accountable. The “buck stops with the head guy—you.”

Young people need to hear this early in life. As they assume more control over their lives, they must accept responsibility for their actions. They must understand that as they leave home and live their own lives and attain personal freedom, with it comes a great weight of responsibility. They are responsible for their actions and will have to live with the consequences, good or bad.

God created man with the ability to make his own decisions. Free-will it's called. We as the offspring of Adam have the same free-will. We may choose to live anyway we want to live, do anything we want to do. But as Adam and Eve were held accountable for their actions, so will we.

There's no escaping accountability. (*“And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.”* Hebrews 9:27)

We need to make wise choices and exercise sound judgment, for as “boss” of our lives we will be held accountable by our peers in this life, and answer to God in the judgment.

Be your own boss—accept full responsibility. This is the message that needs to be heard!

WHERE HAS ALL THE SHAME GONE?

Two things amaze me: (1) How much effort one will put forth to get out of work. And (2) the mental gymnastics one will perform to avoid guilt and shame. The very emotions God has given us to avoid self-destruction.

We are witnessing the demise of shame. Some want it declared an unnecessary emotional burden that needs to be removed from society. It is being blamed for emotional problems, societal problems, and relational problems. It is felt that if shame (and it's siamese twin, guilt) can somehow be removed then they will be able to live in harmony and peace.

What is being ignored is the fact that every action has a reaction (consequence). Every actions has an effect, beneficial or detrimental. The effect can't removed or altered.

God gave us the feeling of pain, so that one might not continue to injure ourselves physically. The pain we feel when burned causes a reaction and a desire to avoid further consequences. Guilt and shame are emotions with which God has endowed us, so that we cease from pursuing a course of action harmful to ourselves. They keep us from self-destruction.

Doing right brings feelings of satisfaction, peace, and inward harmony. Doing wrong brings feelings of guilt, shame, and inward turmoil, brought on by the knowledge that one have done wrong.

To maintain emotional stability such feelings must be addressed. No one can endure for very long the shame and guilt brought on by doing wrong. Something has to be done to restore peace and inward harmony.

It is apparent to any intelligent person that the way to do this is to stop doing wrong, be remorseful, and "mend fences."

However, such a course of action is not acceptable to those who want to continue doing wrong. For them there another way must be found to restore inward peace and harmony. Here is where the mental gymnastics begin.

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**Exercise number 1:** Demand that others not be judgmental: to accept you for what you are. Simply stated: I would never say you're wrong, so don't tell me I'm wrong.

**Exercise number 2:** Decriminalize the wrong. "Society has put unreasonable restrictions on one's actions." It is felt that "God gave us the desires and it can't be wrong to satisfy the yearnings." Simple observation: To reclassify wrong as right doesn't change the consequences.



**Exercise number 3:** To accept the philosophy, “I’m ok, you’re ok.” Simply stated: I won’t consider you wrong in the wrong that you are doing, and you are not to consider me wrong in the wrong I’m doing.

**Exercise number 4:** To blame others. Parents, family, friends, and enemies are assigned blame for one’s wrong actions. Simply put: My actions may be wrong, but it’s not my fault.

**Exercise number 5.** To blame circumstances. Society, current events, and culture, are deemed to be the culprit. Simply put: I was born into a hostile environment, and it is at the root of my improper actions.

**Exercise number 6.** To find fault with critics. “Who are you to judge me? You aren’t so perfect yourself.” Simple fact: An attempt to cloud the issue, shift the focus away from one self.

**Exercise number 7.** To blur the line between right and wrong to the point that they are indistinguishable from one another. Simply: situation ethics.

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To remove guilt and shame is a futile effort. To deny their existence is sheer folly. “In vain do they . . .” are words from the Bible. All such effort will come to naught.

WHAT TO DO

The remedy is simple—and painful. It is difficult to swallow—but effective. It’s readily available. No prescription is needed; you can get it “over-the-counter.”

Welcome guilt as a friend-in-need. Embrace shame as an ally. With these two ever present in our lives, we can avoid inward turmoil, pain, and suffering. They will aid us in our pursuit of inward peace and harmony.

'IT'S ONLY A PIECE OF PAPER'

I have heard some say that a marriage license is “only a piece of paper.” I have even heard some brethren make the same comment. Whatever the reason behind the statement, those who make it are sadly mistaken or wilfully ignorant.

The marriage license (the legal document) is only a piece of paper? On this “piece of paper” are the names and signatures of the couple being united, duly solemnized by a person the government has empowered. It is a declaration made to all people, and to the powers that be, that a marriage union, a covenant, a solemn exchange of vows and a marriage contract have been entered into. The license is only the legal aspect of this union. It's what makes the marriage legal. It confirms that a marriage has taken place.

WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE?

First, marriage is a union of two of God's crowning creation—mankind. One man and one woman joined together, becoming one flesh.

Second, it is a covenant between two people. A compact entered into declaring that the man and the woman have covenanted to live together as husband and wife, forming a new family unit, with the intent of procreation – producing the next generation in their families.

Third, this marriage covenant is sealed by solemn vows made in the presence of witnesses and in the presence of God (Yes, God is a witness to such an action.) The vows often contain the words, “I take thee ...” and “until death do us part.” That is a binding and permanent vow.

Fourth, marriage is a contract, agreed to by both parties. A binding contract with only one “escape clause.”

Fifth, marriage is called “holy matrimony” for good reason. It is a union instituted and approved by God, the Father and Creator.

NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY

Marriages are not to be torn apart. *“Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”* Matthew 19:6

Covenants are not to be broken. *“If a man makes a vow to the Lord, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.”* Numbers 30:2

Contracts and agreements are not to be violated. *“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”* Matthew 19:9

Marriage is to be treated as a sacred union. And He answered and said, *“Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them*

male and female, and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh?'" Matthew 19:4-5

Legal and God-approved are not synonymous. God doesn't necessarily approve of every legal marriage or divorce.

ONLY A PIECE OF PAPER?

Are the title documents of everything you own only a piece of paper? Is your vehicle ownership document only a piece of paper? Is a diploma only a piece of paper? Is that Installment Contract you signed only a piece of paper? Is a dollar bill only a piece of paper? Is the Bible only a piece of paper? Yes, a marriage license is more than a piece of paper. Much more!

"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge." Hebrews 13:4

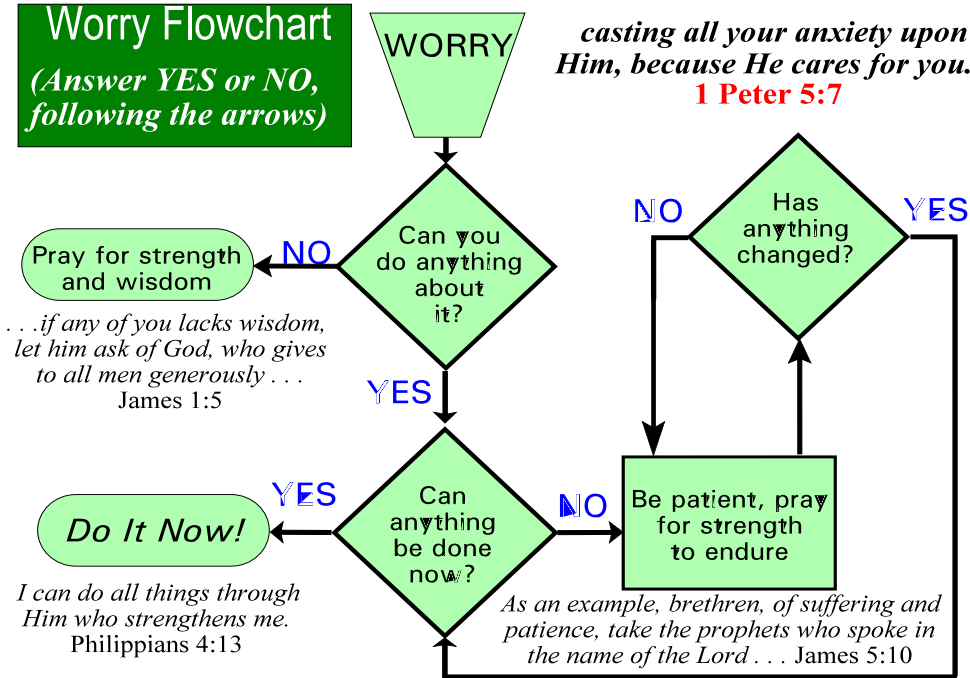
WORRY AND ANXIETY

Things happen over which we have little or no control. And they cause us to have concern which can escalate and turn into worry and anxiety.

Some years ago a member ask me for some Biblical references that would help her deal with a problem that was causing her to have sleepless nights and stressful days. I designed this flowchart based on principles taught in the New Testament to aid her in dealing with her anxiety. She said it helped her greatly. I have reproduced it here with the thought that others may find it helpful.

Worry Flowchart (Answer YES or NO, following the arrows)

casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.
1 Peter 5:7



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