American Decency Association PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org

Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts April 2014

When Scripture Is the Controversy

by: Jonathan Parnell - Desiring God



Vision controversy reevangelicals in the com- Christians, ing days will be about the interpretation Bible, not homosexuality.

recent scuffle is the more communities as part of vital issue of how disciples their ongoing struggle to of Jesus posture them- live and worship faithfully selves toward God's word. before God." It's not simply about our (Fowl, Engaging Scripture, grasp of what Scripture is, 62, emphasis added). or our conviction of Scripture's inerrancy, or even But if the where we land with different interpretations. It's and concerns" should shape fundamentally about how how they read the Bible, we approach the words of where do these actually God, even before we get to come from? According the interpretation part. It's to this approach, these about how we look when values are formed by the we're looking at Scrip- church's consensus. It's ture

The question is: What thinks collectively is the church doing when it's doing what it does with the Bible?

When King

One approach is to say that the way Christians understand Scripture should be determined by If we learned anything the values of the church from [the recent World itself. The authority isn't to "read the Spirit." Now, the Bible, but what the garding homosexual mar- church says as a whole. riage], maybe it's that the Advocating this view, real controversy among one scholar writes, "For scriptural should shape and be shaped by the convictions, practices, Beneath the surface of the and concerns of Christian

church's "convictions, practices, all about what the church

whatever the church feels is important in this "ongoing struggle" to live and worship faithfully. Consensus Is But how do we know what's important in this ongoing struggle?

> As one scholar goes on to argue, our discernment is supposed to come by the Spirit's leading. We need that may sound nice, but it's very unclear. How do we follow the Spirit when the text he illumines is disregarded? How can we hear his voice when his words are silenced? Is it okay to muffle some of what God says because many professing Christians think it should be different?

Chasing the Wrong **Spirit**

When it comes down to it — when the consensus of what's important relies on the church's feelings that are disconnected from what the Bible says then the only legitimate motivation for the

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If we learned anything from [the recent World Vision controversy regarding homosexual marriage], maybe it's that the real controversy among evangelicals in the coming days will be about the Bible, not homosexuality.

recent scuffle is the more vital issue of how disciples of Jesus posture themselves toward God's word. It's not simply about our (Fowl, Engaging Scripture, Chasing grasp of what Scripture is, 62, emphasis added). or our conviction of Scripture's inerrancy, or even where we land with difwe're looking at Scrip- church's consensus. It's ture.

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[Continued from page 1]

consensus is the pressure into which we try to cram Scripture have its say. God's word, lopping off whatever parts don't fit. Sure, the Bible must Here is where is found the be interpreted, and that "convictions, and concerns" that shape disagreements on some the understanding of parts, and there have been Scripture.

And when it comes to by taking actual stances, if But humility here isn't the consensus is unclear throwing our hands up — say, if the issue remains in the air and saying that divisive — then the everyone's reading is only option is to claim legitimate. Humility isn't neutrality. Until the real looking at one another and authority of consensus confusing hermeneutics comes out to play, all with human dignity. we can do is buy time on the sidelines and say Humility has to do with this whole thing is about how we come to the personal sensibilities.

posture obey everything I have ears, hoping for God to

commanded you. Take up vour cross, let the dead bury the dead, don't look back. Not turn your back on my word. Not take your fill of popular opinion. Not Holy Spirit"—who works keep calm and make sure everyone likes you.

Humbled in Hope

of society. The spirit of the There is a better way. age becomes the real spirit It's not new, though, or we follow, and then that profound. It's the approach becomes the path of life that simply wants to let

> practices, matters. And there are ridiculous things in history that were supported wrong readings.

> > Book.

toward It means we move toward Scripture is far removed Scripture, even before we from the discipleship open its pages, by clinging to which Jesus calls us. to God, not ourselves. We He says teach them to come yielded, with eager

sanctify our minds, not our minds sanction his will. As Calvin puts it, we "bid our reason give way, submit, and subject itself to the with his word, not apart from it. Never against it.

The humble heart gives way to God's word, even when it's unpopular, and

O God, make me know your ways. Teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me. for you are the God of my salvation, and for you I wait all the day long. (Psalm 25:4-5)

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The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever. Psalm 119:160



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