

A photograph of a narrow canyon with a river at the bottom. The canyon walls are made of dark, layered rock. The sky is filled with dramatic, grey clouds. The text is overlaid on the image.

**WHEN THE WAY FEELS**

NARROW

# SIMPLY ENGAGE

- It is tempting to become preoccupied with the troubling question of our friends' spiritual condition. After all, if we care about them we should be concerned (Luke 19:10, James 5:20, Romans 9:2-3, Philippians 2:4, Luke 15:4).
- But does the concern lead us to act, or just question? Far too often, Christians will indulge in being *bothered* by doctrinal and theological differences with friends and family members – even to the point of despair and personal spiritual crisis – but that concern only manifests in the desire to somehow ignore, justify, or conform to the false teaching.
- Simply put, God never asks us to render eternal judgment for anybody, but to just engage with them...

# IS THERE AN ANSWER?

- So, what will God do with those who are misinformed and misguided, but have good motives? The ignorant? People who are believers but unwilling to budge on important theological or doctrinal points? What about those who are "really close" to the truth, but just not quite there?
- I DON'T KNOW. I can't know. But the Bible doesn't allow us to philosophize, theorize, or will anybody into salvation.
- Mark 12:34 – "Not far" is close, but still not in the kingdom.
- Philippians 3:2-6 – Paul acted with a clear conscience while a persecutor of the church. Also see 1 Timothy 1:12ff.
- Acts 18:24ff – Nobody would doubt Apollos' motives (or incredible knowledge, for that matter), but when you're wrong, you're wrong.

# UNFATHOMABLE GRACE

- What God chooses to do with our well-meaning, but misinformed, religious friends is entirely up to Him. He does not need my help deciphering motives, or separating the saved from the unsaved. In fact, the process is so delicate that one parable illustrates our inability to properly make the call (Matthew 13:24-30).
- The Lord knows those who are His, so our responsibility is to name His name and live a life that is consistent with His will (2 Tim. 2:19).
- We must learn to become very comfortable with God's sovereignty. While His incredible, unfathomable grace touches our lives, we must let it touch others' lives as God judges. He will be merciful and compassionate as He sees fit (Romans 9:14-15).

A dramatic landscape featuring a narrow canyon path that leads to a bright opening in the distance. The sky is filled with heavy, grey clouds, and the overall scene is dimly lit, creating a sense of mystery and urgency. The path is flanked by dark, rugged rock walls.

**GOD EXPECTS US TO  
HAVE A SENSE OF  
URGENCY**

REVELATION 3:19, ACTS 19:1ff, 1 TIMOTHY 4

# HOW CAN WE BE THE ONLY ONES WITH ALL THE TRUTH?

- First, who is making this claim? We need to be careful not to act just as denominational as the denominations. It's not "us" vs. "them." Our "team" doesn't win while everybody else loses.
- Remember, everybody has equal access to all the truth (John 16:13), so it's not like a bunch of eighteenth century coots stumbled across some great secret or a mystery decoder ring. Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38 have always been there – human traditions and manmade doctrines are the problem! Baptism means to immerse, so things like sprinkling simply don't cut it. That's not obscure information.
- If you really do believe something is truth, then why shouldn't you be willing to defend it as exclusive? We have something of incredible value (Matthew 13:45-46).

# METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

- Dialogue without judgment – Ask questions about what people believe and practice, while withholding judgment until you get the complete picture. Don't always assume that a person agrees with everything their denomination teaches. Let him or her explain a belief without putting words into his or her mouth.
- Don't be the one to shut down communication – "I love talking about the Bible, even with those who disagree with me. Let's do this again some time." Remember Acts 24:24ff.
- Remember who the enemy is – False ideas and traditions trap people, ultimately, because of the influence of Satan. 1 Timothy 4:1 explains this. Don't take things personally. Make sure that you are debating doctrines/practices and their origins, not the people and their motives.