

MIDDLE GROUND

Middle Ground in the Home

- The Clearly Right Choice

- Righteous - Hardest - Leads to Eternal Life - Requires a large amount of Faith - Requires us to accept that God is in control of our lives, and that He cares for us

- The Clearly Wrong Choice

- Sinful - Easiest - Leads to Eternal Death - Requires no Faith at all - Doesn't require us to admit that God even exists, or that he is at work in our lives

- The Middle Ground

- Neither Sinful nor Righteous - Complicated - **CAN** lead to either Eternal Life or Death - Depending on how you deal with complications - Appears to require less faith in the beginning... But, often evolves into something very complicated that will test your faith to it's limits and even beyond - Usually requires us to have Faith that God is alive and active... But, we feel that we need to help out a little bit... Often doesn't provide the rich level of reward that doing Right does...

- Again, our purpose is to look at our "Home Life", and:

- 1 - Remind us to keep looking for what is Clearly Right and what is Clearly Wrong, and to discuss the Middle Ground that are neither Right nor Wrong
- 2 - Remind us that complications will come into our lives whenever we chose an Acceptable Alternative
- 3 - Encourage us to strive for the higher ground, and not be so happy to accept "Middle Ground" in our lives

- At home, it's in our relationships that we see the whole plethora of gray...

- That is why Marriage / Divorce issues have been such a contention for years...
- I'm not going to lecture you on Marriage / Divorce...

- But, the scripture is full of some very interesting Middle Ground...
- One that's always puzzled me, is in Matthew 19...
- Matthew 19:1-6
 - 1 - And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan;
 - 2 - And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.
 - 3 - The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?
 - 4 - And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,
 - 5 - And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?
 - 6 - Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.
- Jesus quotes from Genesis 1 and 2... and states that "from the beginning, it was so."
- Yet... Abraham, spoken of in James as the "friend of God", and David, described in Acts as "a man after God's own heart", both had several wives and were not criticized for it...
- Possibly, the solution to this conundrum is the application of this idea of Middle Ground...
- What Jesus clearly states is obviously the Clearly Right choice...
- It would have been Clearly Wrong to abandon their first wife for another, or to not provide for, or defraud any of their wives...
- It seems like Middle Ground for them to have more than one wife...
 - Now, let's apply some of the principles we've learned about the concept of Middle Ground
 - Not harder... Not easier... But, complicated...
 - David and Abraham seemed to make it through untarnished, but we read of Solomon, that "he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart from the Lord.

- Having multiple wives was neither Right nor Wrong... It wasn't a sin itself, but for Solomon, it was a choice that clearly brought with it complications. Complications bring opportunities to sin... and Solomon failed at that trial.
- A safer choice, would have been to chose the Clearly Right option, that Jesus reminds us was there from the beginning, and stick with one wife...
- We can find ourselves accepting similar Alternatives, and experiencing similar complication, and running into similar problems when we take a spouse...
 - Even if we just take one...
- There are 1,001 different scenarios in marriage relationships, and I'm sure that we can find Middle Ground in them all...
- But, first I think it's important that we take a look at marriage itself...
- There's some evidence that marriage itself might be Middle Ground
- 1st Corinthians 7:6-9
 - 6 - But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.
 - 7 - For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.
 - 8 - I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.
 - 9 - But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.
- It appears that Paul is setting it up this way... And he has a convincing argument...
- 1st Corinthians 7:27-33
 - 27 - Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.
 - 28 - But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.
 - 29 - But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;
 - 30 - And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;
 - 31 - And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.
 - 32 - But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

- 33 - But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.
- The Clearly Right Choice
 - Is to stay single and dedicate yourself to serving the Ecclesia
- The Clearly Wrong Choice
 - Would be to live a life of wanton lustfulness and abandon...
- The Middle Ground
 - We have to be honest... Is to marry...
 - You have not sinned...
 - You have brought complications into your life, that the single person avoids...

(Many people find that their mate is a good source of help in working through the complications that arise... but, nonetheless, they are there...)
- I like best how he phrases it at the end of the chapter...
- 1st Corinthians 7:35-38
 - 35 - And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.
 - 36 - But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.
 - 37 - Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.
 - 38 - So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.
- If you marry, you are doing well...
 - If you don't marry, you're doing better...
- A little more positive spin on it...
- So... Before we start talking about some marriage situations that are "less than ideal," let's remember that we chose less than the ideal, when we married... And let's

remember to have a little more respect and give a little more support to those that remain unmarried and continue in the service of the Lord

- Probably the most popular marriage situation that falls into the “less than ideal” category is Divorce... (extremely popular, nowadays...)
- I'd like to look how this principle of Middle Ground applies here also...
 - The Clearly Right choice
 - Reconciliation... Obviously, it's best to resolve our problems and save the marriage... The hardest... Requires the most faith... Requires trust that God will work - Recognizing that YOU can't resolve the problem, and it's only through prayer that it will be healed!...
 - The Clearly Wrong choice
 - Divorce - Closing the door entirely to any hope of repairing the relationship
 - The Middle Ground
 - Temporary Separation - Some time to work things out - A cooling-off period - A time to reassess what is valuable to you, and revalue your relationship...
 - Complications - Loneliness, Dating, “Out of sight, out of mind...” I've so many drift apart, and never return
- What about other marital problems?
 - They all face these same three basic choices...
- Abuse:
 - Clearly, it would be Wrong to Fight Back...
 - The Middle Ground is to leave, and remove yourself from the danger... This is not wrong. It will bring with it complications, of course... Once you're out, will you ever go back?, etc...
 - The other choice is harder to face...
 - We have to admit that it would Clearly be the Right thing to do, if you chose to stay with your husband and remain faithful to your vows...

- I think of Abigail and Nabal... Can you picture a more brutish, abusive, base man... Had she left him? NO!
 - Of course, this course is the “Higher Road”, and requires the MOST amount of Faith
 - This course requires complete dependence upon the FACT that God is alive and active in your life, and he will deliver you...
 - I’m not trying to tell anyone what to do...
 - I just want to remind us all that we have options...
 - We don’t have to just do the “automatic thing”...
 - The thing that “everyone” does when facing a situation like that...
 - We CAN chose a higher road...
 - All of the options that we chose have consequences
 - Speaking about consequences of our actions...
 - What about Unmarried Pregnancies... Another problem in our Households...
 - Clearly Wrong
 - Abortion
 - Middle Ground
 - Adoption - Not Right or Wrong - As Christadelphians we bristle at this alternative, because we ask, “How are they going to learn the truth?”
 - Story of Heather Brinkerhoff
 - Clearly Right
 - Single Motherhood - You are going to face some major hurdles if you chose to follow this path - This will not be an easy road...
- Again... The higher road, the Right Choice - ALWAYS requires the absolute HIGHEST amount of Faith - You have to remember that God does daily work miracles, and will perform wonders in your life... You can’t rely on your own abilities... Or even your attempts to help Him out...

- Let's leave this "plethora" of possible Marriage / Divorce options and look at one other example...
- Drinking
- 1st Timothy 5:23
 - 23 - Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.
- NPR recently stated that "mild consumption" does make you live longer... Casual drinkers are more relaxed, less stressed, more jovial... All things that contribute to a longer life...
- 1st Corinthians 6:9-10
 - 9 - Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,
 - 10 - Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.
- We all understand that drinking to the level of drunkenness is Clearly Wrong
- The Middle Ground is to responsibly drink - It is NOT wrong. It will bring complications...
 - Story of me and Jack Hulbert - Idealistic, impressionable, IMMATURE, young 16 year-old Brother - Ruined by witnessing one harmless act
- Let's not forget the higher road... The Clearly Right choice is not to drink at all. - Can anyone find anything WRONG with NOT drinking?... What of the Health Benefits, you might ask? Again... Remember that this road requires faith that God will care for you if you are making Right decisions for Right reasons...
- I want to encourage us NOT to be satisfied with the Middle Ground
- Don't think that we only have two alternatives...
 - Drunk or Not Drunk...
 - Abortion or Adoption...
 - Divorce or just Legal Separation...
- Gray has become so plenteous, that we often only compare just Black and Gray...

- Let's not forget that there is a WHITE out there somewhere
- Encourage us to keep looking for what is the Clearly Right choice. The choice that isn't full of complications, pitfalls and problems... The choice that will probably require us to invest a serious amount of Faith in our Heavenly Father...
- But, the choice that offers the best life now, and Eternal Life to come