

In Summary....or Not

By itself, a summary doesn't usually mean much. In business we hear things like "skip the details, just give me the big picture". Usually when the person giving the info actually does that, there comes an immediate series of questions asking for details because the "summary" simply was not adequate.

The fact that details are required still does not usually stop the relentless pursuit of a way to avoid them. When this happens with issues relating to what the Bible teaches, we sometimes refer to it as being "out of context". To avoid being out of context we need to always expand what we learn to include all relevant details.

Having said that, summaries are great and can be very useful when the reader has some background information to draw on, or when used to point the reader to the associated details.

The Bible makes use of summaries while also providing enough details to make the point being addressed. There are volumes of other written materials containing information to help us as we progress.

The Apostle John puts it this way:

John 21:25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Here is this works thing popping up. Paul is saying we have work to do. He probably did not just add that in to fill out a paragraph.

So all scripture is useful, and for our purposes, complete.

Sometimes a little summarizing may be a good thing to get us started, as long as we realize we will be spending our lifetime expanding on what we learn.

When we have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are then tasked with learning more about our new way of living.

Jesus sums things up as to how we should handle the worries of this world, and how to come closer to God:

*Matthew 6:24-33 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well**". (Emphasis added)*

So if we faithfully seek God first, and serve Him only, the rest of our needs will come. The logical part of this summary to expand on is to get into more details about seeking His kingdom and righteousness. And how do we do that?

Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment.

*Matthew 22:34-40 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' **All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.**" (Emphasis added)*

What a great use of summary. He was aware those he was speaking to were familiar with the Law and the Prophets (information contained in the Old Testament). By referring to the Law and the Prophets He gave them (and us) the source of relevant details available at the time.

The Apostle Peter puts it this way:

2 Peter 1:3-11 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil

*desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. **For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** (Emphasis added) But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

Peter gives us some steps to take beginning with our faith (our means of salvation through grace), and ending with love (faith and resulting works), which encompasses all the other steps. In increasing measure means learning more and more details.

Now all we have to do is take things to another level, which leads to another level, which.....

As the Apostle Paul writes:

Philippians 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

All I can say about all this is AMEN.

Thoughts by John Oliver

a grateful and unworthy servant