

## THE COMPASS

### Part 4 of “The Eye Chart Gospel”: *Seeing Conflict God’s Way* **The Parable of the Weather Channel**

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How was the weather today?

I check weather.com for the weather, or the weather page at cnn.com — or the Weather Channel on cable.

Hardly ever just open a window and stick my head out and check it firsthand anymore! Why not? Because I don’t want to know how the weather is now. I want to know how the weather is *gonna* be.

Jesus told kind of a Weather Channel parable once:

**Luke 12:54-59**

**54 He said to the crowd: “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘It’s going to rain,’ and it does.**

**55 And when the south wind blows, you say, ‘It’s going to be hot,’ and it is.”**

He was saying, You’re smart.

You’ve used your brains, you’ve figured things out.

You’ve applied your powers of observation and determined patterns and mapped out predictions and you’ve gotten really good at science.

And it’s more than just the weather.

If Jesus were telling this parable today, he could talk about how science has deciphered our DNA, mapping the human gene, how we’re cloning animals.

We’ve developed a zillion drugs to correct thousands of different physical conditions.

If you go out in your backyard and stretch out by the pool, there are satellites that can literally take a picture of your face, a photograph so clear that you can be positively identified.

Because of advances in science, our knowledge is awesome.

Today we know that if you could drive to the sun at 55 miles per hour it would take about 193 years. (I would say, Drive faster! 55? What’s up with that?)

We know that a 75-pound octopus, because it has no backbone, can squeeze through a hole the size of a silver dollar.

We know that the food making up a single bite of a tyrannosaurus Rex would feed a human family of 4 for an entire month.

We know that a mosquito has 47 teeth.

We know that the average lifespan of an umbrella is 1-1/2 years.

(And we know that I am really spending too much time on the Internet.)

Science has revolutionized the way we live.

We have an incredible array of products that didn't exist when we were born.  
 Try to explain to a teenager that when someone my age was a kid, we didn't have  
 VCRs and videos.

We didn't even have 8-tracks when I was a kid.

No cell phones. No microwave ovens.

There were no PCs. No Palm Pilots.

*Digital* just meant your clock only had numbers, no hands.

Science has given us CAT scans and MRI's.

We have sonogram and in-vitro and test tube babies.

Science can tell us the gender of our baby before birth, and whether the baby is going  
 to be healthy.

It seems like science can tell us anything and everything we want to know.

In fact, science has been able to tell us so much that we have gradually convinced  
 ourselves, in the past few generations,  
 that science is the only way to really *know* anything.

Think about it.

How should we eat?

Well, what does the Journal of the American Medical Association say?

What does Dr. Agitston of the South Beach Diet say?

What's the daily minimum requirement of the vitamins and nutrients I need? How many  
 complex carbohydrates do I need? What's my glycemic index?

I might have a sense of what's good for me and what's not.

But man, if I know what the scientists have determined, then I feel I really *know* how I  
 should eat.

Child behavior. What do the child psychologists say?

When our children first arrived my wife and I read books by child psychologists —  
 scientists devoted to studying the thinking and behavior of children — and people  
 got so sick of hearing us say "Well, the book says..."

I might say or do something with my child, and something in my gut says, Mmm, that's  
 not right.

But man, if I just had the time to look up what the scientists have figured out, then I  
 would really *know* whether my gut instinct was right or wrong.

How should I live?

I feel like the more science can tell me about how to live,  
 the more I'll really know how to live.

In fact, how many of us are actually holding our breath,  
 hoping against hope that the scientists won't discover something  
 that contradicts the Bible...

because man oh man, how do you contradict science?

Let's face it, science is the Supreme Court of knowledge.

But the idea that science is the only way to really *know* things  
 is actually a relatively new idea.

Only in the past few generations have we come to this idea.

And it's not God's idea.

Actually, this view is a kind of religion, which might be called "scientism."

Peter Kreeft is a professor at Boston College who has thought and written a lot about this phenomenon,

and here's what he says — and I'll paraphrase a little bit to make it clearer:

"Scientism ... holds that whatever science cannot detect does not exist. [It only allows for] nature, or the laws of nature.

[And he says this comes from wanting to weaken God, to make him less of a force in our thinking and in our lives.

Dr. Kreeft says, In the old days, the pagans weakened the idea of God by cutting] him into thousands of little pieces, [making him into lots of] little gods and goddesses.

[But now in our generation we have a] new, streamlined, scientific way to weaken God, [and that] is to flatten him out, to reduce him to nature, or the laws of nature."

The fact is, faith is very threatening to science because science is so *limited* in how it can prove things.

Science has to be able to observe an event, recreate the event repeatedly in the form of an experiment, observe the repetitions, measure the results, report on them,

and make predictions on the basis of the results.

Faith doesn't fit into that kind of grid.

In fact, when you get right down to it, even the origins of life — evolution and creationism — don't fit into that kind of grid.

Science can't really tell us whether evolution or creationism is true.

All it can do is speculate.

Dr. Kreeft says it this way, and I observe this to be true in my own thinking, and in the thinking of many of my friends, both Christians and non-Christians; he says:

"We have an unscientific attitude toward science, a religious attitude toward science.

[We've come to believe that the only good proofs are scientific proofs.

But] There is no scientific proof that [proves that] only scientific proofs are good proofs; [there is] no way to prove by the scientific method that the scientific method is the only valid method....

A scientific attitude examines all available evidence."

In other words, if we're going to be really scientific and open-minded, we should consider things like faith.

Now of course we don't want to be morons.

We don't want to believe something that doesn't make any sense at all, something that's totally illogical.

Here's the way Kreeft puts it:

"Logical thinking is not the only method, [it's not] the only string to our bow."

Something has to be logically true to be true, but logical thinking isn't the only way to arrive at that truth.

In fact, as Dr. Kreeft has pored over the Scriptures year after year, he observes that we actually find answers to life's questions by 5 methods, not just one:

- \* from our own experiences
- \* from other people's experiences, which includes a lot of things
  - like people telling you what happened to them
  - and history
  - and reports on scientific experiments
  - and so forth
- \* from reasoning, which is actually just thinking about our experiences and other people's experiences
- \* from imagination, which is a way of seeing things without experience
- \* and from faith, which is trusting what someone else says even if you can't imagine it.

You know, it is possible for things to be true even if we can't see them, even if we can't experience them, even if we can't imagine experiencing them.

The philosopher Pascal says it this way: "Everything that is incomprehensible does not cease to exist."

And look, we have an example from our own lives:

We have friends and family members who have died in the past.

What is going on with them right now?

We can't see what's going on with them right now.

We can't experience what's going on with them right now.

We have very little word from others who have died about what they have experienced after death.

We can hardly imagine what's going on with our friends and relatives right now.

We are pretty much reduced to faith — trusting what God says about what is going on with our friends right now.

Science can't help us with this.

Does this mean it's not happening?

No. It means science doesn't answer all the questions.

If we come to put science on too high a pedestal,

we are missing opportunities to understand more of the truth

and live a fuller, richer, more rewarding life.

Now Jesus kind of beats up on science in **Luke 12**,

but as we study our way through his words and teachings,

we find that he is just as hard on commerce, on money-making.

He also comes down equally hard on high society, on social ladder-climbing.

And he comes down equally hard on people who lead in ministry but who let their pride guide their interactions with other people.

In other words, Jesus warns us, again and again,

warns us relentlessly,

warns us fervently:

Be on your guard against anything that you put your trust in,

or make the top priority in your life,

because anything you put your trust in

or make the top priority in your life  
 that *isn't God's thing*  
 is going to disappoint you  
 or hurt you  
 or diminish your life in some way,  
 or undermine the work of the Kingdom,  
 or rob you of something better that God has planned for you.

So this truth can apply to a lot of areas of our life.  
 And actually, I wish Jesus had just left this parable real generic like that.  
 But as usual, Jesus doesn't leave well enough alone.  
 He goes the extra step, and really nails me where I live.  
 Look at what Jesus says in verse 56 (in his usual delicate way):

**56 Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?** (in other words, what's happening in your life right now).

You've got a handle on all this global stuff —  
 you've got this big picture,  
 you're an expert on the economy of the Asian subcontinent,  
 you can crunch the numbers,  
 you can do demographics and psychographics and market analysis and make computer models,  
 and you have a well-thought-out view on political issues, you've thought through your position on human rights and the environment and economics,  
 and you have all these advances in science under your belt —  
 but you don't have a handle on today,  
 your own little world:  
 how to live,  
 how to be a success in the very next conversation you have with someone.  
 How to be a success as a human being.  
 How to get through the day without doing spiritual damage or emotional damage to yourself or someone else.

And then, Jesus brings it down to the one area where he knew we would have the most trouble.

Not philosophy.

Not theory.

Just how to get along.

How to love each other.

Here's what he says:

**57 "Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right?"**

**58 As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled to him on the way, or he may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison.**

**59 I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny."**

Jesus says, in a way: This is not rocket science.

You can know all about rocket science and still fail at life.

He says, In life, there are going to be problems and misunderstandings and disagreements and hurts between people.

Learning how to make our way through this maze of relationship stresses and problems is very important.

It's Thing 2 of the 2 Things that are most important in life: Loving God, loving people.

From day to day, in dozens of different settings and situations, we're going to have adversaries.

Someone is going to say or do something that is wrong, or unfair, or cruel, or stupid, and it is going to rile you.

There is nothing wrong with that.

If someone has wronged you, it's natural and appropriate to feel angry or hurt about it.

You can follow Christ for three quarters of a century, like my friend Doris Brown, or you can be a wild, devil-may-care pagan — and either way, if someone does you wrong, you are going to feel angry or hurt.

The difference between Doris Brown and the rank heathen isn't how hurt or angry they feel.

The difference between the Christ-following Doris Brown and the Christ-rejecting person should be in how they *act in response* to the hurt and anger.

Jesus comes back to this issue again and again and again — which tells us that as far as God is concerned, *this* is where the rubber meets the road.

What he's interested in giving us isn't so much a lofty, philosophical world view or political power or social prestige or anything else —

What he's interested in giving us is a way of getting through the day without getting beat up, and without beating up the other guy.

And if he can give us that, since the whole world is beating each other up, then the world is going to know that we have something different.

Why do you think Jesus said in **Matthew 22:36-40** that the greatest commandments are 'Love God' and 'Love your neighbor'?

Why do you think 10 separate times in the New Testament alone we are told, in these specific words, "Love one another."

Because that's what really makes the difference —

for us, for those around us, for people to really *be* the Church, for the Church to function effectively.

How am I going to lead my friends to faith in Christ, to experience the joy of a relationship with God?

By reciting a formula of 4 spiritual laws?

Not if I don't have a lifestyle of love.

By inviting them to a Compass DVD gathering?

Not if they see me clobbering people or hear me bad-mouthing people the rest of the week.

It's the lifestyle of love that will mark me as Christian

and will mark what Christ has given me as something that people want.

Jesus says in **John 13:35** **By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.**

**1 John 4:12,14** says **No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another ... we ...**

**testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.**

When people who love God get together, the devil gets panicky.

We can expect him to camp out right in the middle of us, and bring as many problems and conflicts as he possibly can.

We'll find all kinds of ways to annoy each other.

It's spiritual warfare, plain and simple.

**Ephesians 6:12 says For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against ... the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**

Not that if you have a conflict with someone, you're being influenced by the devil.

But the devil is capable of throwing situations in our path, and I think it's fair to say that the enemy *loves nothing more* than to throw situations into our path that will get us into conflict with each other, and have us respond in a self-defeating, self-destructive way — instead of in the way that God has designed a biblical community to function.

Not just because of the harm it does to the reputation of Christianity, but because of the harm it does to us, as individuals, spiritually, emotionally, even physically.

(Ever lain awake in the middle of the night because of a conflict situation during the day?)

What does Jesus say in this parable?

If you're in conflict, try hard to be reconciled — because the price you pay for unreconciled conflict is huge.

It's like going to jail, and not being able to get out.

He urgently wanted us to realize that our faith is not seminary-level theological philosophy — it is just how we live our life,

how we get through the day,

how to talk and how we talk back,

how we act and how we react,

how we live ... hour by hour, conversation by conversation.