



LOVE

YOU ARE WHAT YOU LOVE: CH 1

by James K. A. Smith • Doug Olena • 9/14/2019

<<http://bit.ly/30mGIIw>>

YOU ARE WHAT YOU LOVE: TO WORSHIP IS HUMAN - CH 1

*What do you want?—
The Power of Habit—
Ancient Wisdom for
Contemporary Christians—
Orienting Desire:
The Quest to Be Human—*



<http://pamelahaddix.com>

JOHN 1:38 “WHAT DO YOU WANT?”

—This question comes at the time two of John the Baptist’s disciples start following Jesus.

They answer: “Where are you staying?”

—This passage seems an unusual origin to the argument Smith is trying to make.

—I’m not sure that “will you come and follow me” is equivalent to “what do you want” or to his question to Peter “Do you love me?”

—Yet, those three statements are equivalent in contrast to Jamie’s telling questions: “What do you know?” or “what do you believe?” that Jesus does not ask.

—I suggest the following clip from Babylon 5 is better.



Episode 13, Season 1 of Babylon 5 "Signs and Portents"

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

- Smith makes the Humean point by saying:
“Our wants and longings and desires are at the core of our identity, the wellspring from which our actions and behavior flow.” 2
- “So discipleship is more a matter of hungering and thirsting than of knowing and believing.”

So, Jamie’s opening shot is to query the mistaken modern practice of equating discipleship purely with teaching and believing correct doctrine.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

- “Every approach to discipleship and Christian formation assumes an implicit model of what human beings are.” 2
- The assumption that we are what we think is a Cartesian supposition. “Human beings are fundamentally *thinking things*.” 3



Modern practices of training Christians mistakenly assume that we are fundamentally (Cartesian) thinking machines.

THINKING THINGS?

- This model, suggests Jamie Smith, ignores “the overwhelming power of habit.” 4
- A disciple is, in the modern world, a learner who acquires “information about God through the Scriptures.”
- If “filling your thinking organ with Bible verses” makes you like Christ, “then changing what you think should change what you are.” 4-5

- Discipleship in this sense is a process of training the mind. That can be only partially true.
- Humans described in this fashion are not real people, but information and data storage devices.
- This is obviously false. Some of us have been the models of right doctrine and really bad behavior. The reductive nature of this characterization of humans is perfectly modern and mistaken.

THE POWER OF HABIT

- ▶ Jamie asks the rhetorical question about whether there is “a gap between what you *know* and what you *do*.” 5
- ▶ Logic and correct thinking are not enough to get us to holiness.



The simple binary thinkers will declare then that we will be stuck with emotionalism, something we can't defend either logically or ethically.

THE POWER OF HABIT

- Jamie answers our puzzlement with: “We don’t need *less* than knowledge; we need more.” 6
- The way we get that is through fostering good habit.
- The Scriptures have a different set of assumptions than *thinking-thingism*.

• This is clearly an attempt to drive 1 Peter 1:5-7 into our focus.

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

• The very density of making this true in ourselves is the definition of developing good habits.

THE POWER OF HABIT

- “Love is the condition for knowledge.” 7
 - “It is not that I know in order to love, but rather: I love in order to know.”
- “Human beings are first and foremost *lovers*.”

My book on the Great Questions also takes love to be the fundamental motive for knowledge.

ANCIENT WISDOM

- The future of Christian discipleship is in the discovery and acquisition of ancient practices, avoiding varieties of modern reductionism. 7

[to do this requires a modern rational discipline to avoid prejudices of the past]



“You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” 7-8

ANCIENT WISDOM

- Augustine:
 - Who made us?
 - What is the purpose of our being?
 - True human being is in relation to the Almighty.

ANCIENT WISDOM

- ▶ For Augustine humans have a purpose, a *telos* (τέλος) a goal or trajectory for being human. 8
- ▶ Teleology is uncomfortable for many modern people. But Smith points us away from humans as reactors to their environment.

The modern thesis is that humans as evolutionarily formed beings are, like evolution itself, not goal directed, but creatures of natural law, of causality, of an environment ordered only by the struggle to survive.

ANCIENT WISDOM

- The heart is “the fulcrum of your most fundamental longings—a visceral, subconscious *orientation* to the world.” 8
- Smith’s reorientation to the heart is substantially like C. S. Lewis’ focus in *The Abolition of Man I* and a variety of other works.

ANCIENT WISDOM

- Smith seeks the redemption of *eros* ("Ἔρως") having been set aside by Christians because of its association with loves of the flesh.
- Eros is associated with desire and attraction. "Think of agape as rightly ordered eros." That is, turning our desires and attractions to God.



The modern Christian contrast between *eros* and *agapé* is artificial, damaging the source and goal of our loves

ANCIENT WISDOM

- ▶ “The question isn’t *whether* you will love something as ultimate; the question is *what* you will love as ultimate.” 10

ORIENTING DESIRE: THE QUEST TO BE HUMAN

- Telos 11
- Not an ideal, but a vision of the good life, not necessarily articulated.
- ...how the world ought to be...

The goal can be characterized as that which we “unconsciously desire and strive toward.” 11

“

We are lovers first and foremost. If we think about this in terms of the quest or journey metaphor, we might say that the human heart is part compass and part internal guidance system.

-Jamie Smith
page 12

ORIENTING DESIRE: THE QUEST TO BE HUMAN

- ▶ Augustine again: “Love is like gravity.” 13
- ▶ When we set our goals on material things, we are weighed down. When, on the other hand, we set our goals on God and heavenly things, we are lifted up.

Here is where habit comes in. Though we are not entirely free to choose what we direct ourselves toward, we can invest ourselves in a model of flourishing that answers the question “What do you want?” with love as both the beginning of our longing and goal of our search.

