

It Is What It Is

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By Dave Havir

BIG SANDY, Texas—Most people have heard the expression "It is what it is." It is a fairly common phrase in our modern world.

And some people who have listened to some of my sermons have heard me say that I am not fond of that phrase. (It surprised me how many people remembered me saying something negative about that phrase.)

A person could ask the following questions.

■ Did you ever say that you are not fond of that phrase?

My response: Yes, I did say that.

■ Do you see any value to a person using that phrase?

My response: Yes, I do.

■ Have you changed your mind about that phrase?

My response: Not at all. But I will say that I did not do a good job in the past of describing my perspective about that phrase. I don't blame people for forming the conclusions that they did.

I thought it might be beneficial to discuss my thoughts about that phrase.

Define the terms

One of the most important tools in having any discussion is to define the terms.

Before a person can accurately evaluate the opinion or perspective spoken by someone else, it is important to clearly understand what the person is saying.

Sometimes, people appear to have a difference of opinion—only to discover with a deeper discussion that their perspectives are similar.

I believe that this habit should be practiced with all subjects. Notice a few.

■ We are saved by grace.

■ God wants us to keep His law.

■ What happens when a person dies?

■ Many people are against abortion, but when does life begin?

No excuse for behavior

It is true that people have heard me denounce the phrase "It is what it is." Let me describe how I don't like a particular way that the phrase is used.

- I don't like it when people use that phrase to excuse their negative behavior.
- "I have had a bad temper all my life. It is what it is."
- "I have never been good at listening to my marriage partner. It is what it is."
- "I am not very good in school. It is what it is."

I believe that using the phrase in those circumstances is an excuse that discourages personal responsibility.

Recognition of life

On the other hand, I believe the phrase can be important in at least two ways.

- The phrase can be reflection of dealing with the realities of life.

2 Corinthians 12:8-10—"Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

- The phrase can help people to avoid blaming other people, and help them to focus upon their personal responsibilities.

Matthew 26:38-39—"Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.' He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, 'O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.' "