Straining Out Gnats While Swallowing Camels

I. Introduction: (Matthew 23:23-24)
A. Under the Law of Moses, both the camel and gnat would be unclean to eat (Leviticus 11:4; 20 – NKJV flying insects / ASV 1901 winged creeping things).
   1. As Jesus said, “these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone”, we cannot perceive one thing greater than another (Exodus 24:3, Deuteronomy 27:26, Deuteronomy 29:29, Jeremiah 26:2-3, Acts 5:17-20, James 2:10, and II John 9).
   2. Partial worship and service is rejected by God (Jeremiah 6:19-20, Jeremiah 14:10-12, Amos 5:21-24, and I Timothy 5:21).
   1. The Pharisees did ‘a’ part by tithing (Deuteronomy 12:5-6).
   2. It was common for the Pharisees to do some things right for all the wrong reasons (Matthew 23:1-5 and Luke 18:10-14).

II. Body: Do we find ourselves focusing on a small part of the picture while missing the whole or even the true picture (i.e. Jews loved the law, but missed the promises to the Gentile therein - Acts 22:21-22; cf. Galatians 3:6-8).
   A. Some carry out traditions, while teaching against such (Mark 7:8-9), and make their traditional ideas and terminology the standard while missing a whole herd of camels.
      1. Focus on “five acts of worship” and miss the object of our worship (Revelation 22:6-9).
         a. Love preaching about denominationalism, alcoholism, baptism, but don’t preach to me about me. We forget the purpose of preaching (I Corinthians 1:21).
         b. A prayer here, a prayer there, just not everywhere (I Timothy 2:8).
         c. Giving, but just because I have to forgetting to whom and why I am giving (II Corinthians 9:7).
         d. The bread, the fruit of the vine, the first day of the week, but forget about why: “in remembrance of me” (I Corinthians 11:23-26).
         e. No piano, scriptural songs, on key, I’m singing; but to who (Ephesians 5:19)?
      2. Focus on “five steps to salvation” and forget the source of salvation (Acts 4:10-12 and Galatians 1:3-5).
      3. Focus on “is it a church of Christ?” (Romans 16:16) missing if the group truly belongs to Christ (Revelation 2:5; cf. II Timothy 1:13 and Titus 2:1).
      4. Focus on “worship apparel” (i.e. tie, coat, dress, etc.) and miss the true apparel (Galatians 3:27, Colossians 3:9-10, Ephesians 6:11, and I Peter 5:5).
   B. Sometimes we miss the big picture by focusing on symptoms rather than spiritual illnesses (i.e. we worry about those who fall away thinking they’re victims, but they’re really not – Hebrews 3:12).
      1. Unfaithfulness in attendance is a symptom that must be treated (Hebrews 10:23-25); but there are larger, underlying problems (Psalms 122:1; cf. I Timothy 3:15).

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a. The unfaithful in attendance is really saying “I’m not interested” in spiritual matters (Colossians 1:21-23).
b. They are also saying they are not interested in working with the local saints (Philippians 1:27).
c. Those who do not attend faithfully are telling others they have a priority problem (Luke 9:62).
d. God provided us with brethren to assemble locally with for our building up, spiritual nourishment, and assistance (Ephesians 4:16); neglecting that is a denial of what God surely believes we need (Acts 2:42-46).

2. We see ignorance and state the obvious, “that person is not studying”, but we fail to ask “why not?” (Psalms 119:97; cf. John 14:23).

3. We see children who are badly misbehaved and say “bad child”, but why not bad parent (Proverbs 29:15)? Aren’t children a measuring stick of the parents (cf. 1 Timothy 3:4-5 and II Timothy 1:5).

C. We can miss the big picture in self-examination (Matthew 7:1-5).

1. We can often deny worldliness (Titus 2:13), while missing how worldly influences have changed us (Nehemiah 13:23-27).
   a. Changes our talk (Titus 2:7-8 and I Peter 4:11).
   c. Changes our apparel (Genesis 3:7; 21, Exodus 28:42, and I Timothy 2:9-10).
   d. Changes our friendships (James 4:4).

2. Sometimes if we’d just live up to our own standards, we’d be okay (Romans 2:1-6).

III. Conclusion

A. Let’s make our focus on the whole, not just little parts of what God wants us to do (Psalms 119:5-6).

B. Matthew 5:20