

Application Is Needed

Throughout the world there are those who can quote Scripture, correctly answer Bible Trivia questions, and accurately teach the Word of God. While commendable, these alone do not suffice. To truly please God and faithfully serve Him, application is needed.

From the epistle of James we learn the urgent need of exercising the will of God. James writes: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (Jas. 1:21-25).

Are you a doer? Do you continue in the "perfect law of liberty"? Too many (even in the church) are content to "preach" but not practice the truth. And yet Jesus clearly taught that a failure to do the will of God, will keep one out of heaven (Mt. 7:21). When it comes to truth, knowledge alone won't cut it. Application is needed.

- by David McPherson

A Great Evangelistic Tool

I think it works better than radio, better than auto-dialers, better than showings of Jule Miller filmstrips, better than mailing out a bulletin, better than Dial-a-Bible-Reading, better than debates, better than cable TV.

What is it? It's brethren not being conformed to the world.

If a church is made up of people who understand 184 current and past issues correctly, but their lives do not show superior conduct, servitude, and holiness, don't expect an auto dialer, computer, printer, broadcast antenna, or cable outlet to compensate for the failure.

When church members think like the world, dress like the world, talk like the world, and chase money and status symbols like the world, it is the world that is winning them, not the other way around.

When church members are selfish, egotistical, arrogant, and shallow, then they are not in a position to help the world to a higher plane.

If our families are splitting up, our children are dropping out, and our homes are little different from our neighbors then our "light" gets rather difficult to notice.

But if people learn self-denial (Lk. 9:23), learn submission to God and care for our neighbor (Matt. 22), learn to be servants (Jn. 13), learn to be content (1 Tim. 6:8), learn to invest in family (Titus 2:5; Eph. 6:4; Prov. 22:6), and learn to clean out the inside of the cup, not just the outside (Matt. 23), then bright lights will shine.

"Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that...they may glorify God" (1 Pet. 2:9-12).

"Present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God...and be not fashioned according to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:1,2).

We are not called simply to know some things different from the world -- we are called to rise above the world, and to "*be holy*" (1 Pet. 1:15). And when people become that kind of light in the world, they become great evangelistic tools in God's service.

And it will far exceed the effect of debates, radio, TV, and mail outs.

- by Scott Smelser

Keeping Our Word & Paying Our Debts

The Bible is very strong on (1) keeping our promises and (2) paying our debts (Ecclesiastes 5:2, 4-5; Numbers 30:2; Romans 13:8; Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9). We are not to go back on our word or fail to repay that which we have borrowed.

We should strive to keep our word. A track record of broken promises or unkept commitments is a very bad track record.

There is nothing sinful or shameful in borrowing money. It may be embarrassing to have to do so, but we can recover from that. If our folly or carelessness put us into a situation in which we had to borrow, we should work on that and endeavor not to repeat the mistake. But the mere step of borrowing money is not in itself either sinful or shameful. What is both sinful and shameful is a deliberate or careless failure to pay back what we have borrowed, and the world is full of people who have done and continue to do that. Many of them profess to be Christians. To use the words of James: *"My brethren, these things ought not so to be"* (James 3:10).

- by **Bill Crews**

"Thou Hast Left Thy First Love"

He has been married to his college sweetheart for fifteen years now. They have two kids, a lovely house in the suburbs, and lots of friends. He's got a good, secure job. Everything looks great. But, in recent months he has been depressed and unhappy. His wife, noticing these changes, has been worried about him. Is he having a "mid~life crisis"? Is there another woman? Finally she summons up the courage to ask him what's wrong.

He assures her that there is no other woman. He would NEVER do such a thing. What's the problem? "To be totally honest", he says, "I just don't love you anymore." Her pain is deep, and obvious. But, the husband hastens to add: "Don't worry. I'm not going to leave you and the kids. I'll still be here. I know it would be wrong. to get a divorce. I'll fulfill my obligations. We'll keep going on."

How do you think the wife will react? Do you imagine that she will be relieved? Will she be happy to know that their marriage will continue, but only as an outward show? Is that enough? Can "fulfilling obligations" take the place of "I love you"?

This imaginary account has too many real life counterparts. We think there are a number of spiritual parallels, too. How many Christians have lost their real love for the Lord? Oh, yes, they continue to go through motions. They worship regularly, and even show up for some of the special things. But, it is done out of obligation, not out of genuine love. Will that suffice? NO! Jesus says, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. . . repent and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly and remove thy candlestick out of his place" (Rev. 2:4,5). The Lord desires service based on love. Nothing else will do.

- by **Greg Gwin**