

“Back to Basics”

A coach of a football team was being interviewed following his team's embarrassing loss to a much weaker team. He said that it was going to be necessary for his team to “get back to the basics” if they wished to be a winning team. The coach realized that the team had not built a winning tradition on the “razzle-dazzle” and “hot-dog” plays, but had done so by concentrating on the “basics” of good football. When the team forgot the “basics” and engaged in the “exciting” and the “unusual plays” they had momentary success (maybe one touchdown) and caused much excitement among the spectators. However this success was short-lived and the excitement did not last when the team was unable to win consistently with such play. They needed to get “back to the basics” if they were to have long-term success.

I believe there is a lesson in the above story for members of the body of Christ. It seems that many members (including some preachers) become bored with “the basics” when it comes to serving God. They decide that we need something new and more exciting. To simply preach the gospel of Christ and encourage men and women to abide in the teaching of God's word in all they say and do is just “too old fashioned” and boring to them. So, they come up with something “new” and exciting. They appeal to people with recreation and entertainment. They devise various social projects and make them the work of the church. They begin to sound like denominational theologians rather than preachers of the gospel of Christ. As a result of such actions these brethren meet with what they consider success. They attract attention and their numbers increase. There is “excitement” in their midst. They are “on the move.” However, the new soon wears off these “new” projects and it soon becomes apparent that there is no real and lasting value to these “new and exciting” ways. To have such lasting value we must get back to the basics.

We must realize that the long and lasting value is in doing that which will bring God's favor upon us. We can not turn away from “the basics” of His will and expect to please Him. We may receive some momentary “pleasure” or “excitement” from doing “our own thing” but we must remember that such pleasure is but “for a season” (Hebrews 11:25).

Brethren, let us get back to telling men and women that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Let's tell them that Christ has "all authority" (Matthew 28:18-20). Declare unto them that there is "one body, and one Spirit, ... one hope ..., one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God ..." (Ephesians 4:4-6). Let's encourage all men to "speak the same thing that there be no division" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

I realize that in doing this we will be accused of being "narrow-minded" and "tradition bound." Some will say that our teaching and practices are "out-dated" and are not relevant to the needs of modern man. Others will say that we believe that "only your little group" is going to be saved. However, there is something very notable about the things I suggested we should get back to teaching; they are found in the word of God.

May I ask, "What's wrong with just telling men and women what we find revealed in the word of God?" If men have not done what the Bible teaches one must do to receive the forgiveness of sin what right do I have to suggest to him that he is OK and is acceptable before God? If one who has been baptized into Christ sins what right to I have to tell him that so long as he was sincere or was ignorant of his sin he is justified? What is wrong with simply telling such a one that he should repent and confess his sins (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9)?

Something else may sound more appealing and may attract more people for the moment but if men and women are to be saved (have long term success) they must "get back to the basics" of God's word. We can not improve upon it. When we content ourselves with following "the basics" of God's word we will meet with eternal success, that home in heaven with God, Christ and the righteous of all time.

- by James Hahn

Ever Grab a Dog's Ears?

I am a huge fan of dogs. Big ones, small ones, tall ones, fat ones. I love dogs. They are friendly, loyal, fun, loyal, hard working, loyal, furry and loyal (not necessarily in that order).

But as friendly and obedient as dogs can be only a complete idiot would try to pick up a dog by his ears. That's a vivid image, isn't it? Care to hold a Doberman by those short little ears? What about swinging a full-sized Lab by his big floppy ears? We instinctively know better. To grab a dog by his ears is to guarantee pain and injury - and not to the dog!

Solomon plays off this easy-to-see picture to forcefully remind us to mind our own business . . . *"He who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a dog by the ears"* (Proverbs 26:17).

Fooling with someone else's problems, butting into others' arguments, meddling in others' affairs is just not smart. In fact, it's just about as smart as grabbing a dog by his ears. When I see some folks in a big wrangle and I'm tempted to step in and get everyone straightened out I just need to think about those canine ears. Then I will be reminded how my interference is not wanted or needed.

- by Mark Roberts

Blind Faith, Indeed!

Those of us who believe in the Bible account of creation are often ridiculed for having made a 'blind leap of faith'. It is unreasonable, we are told, to believe in something that cannot be 'proved'.

The type of proof that our critics are asking for is empirical proof - - the kind obtained in a scientific laboratory where processes are repeated and observed, and where pertinent data can be recorded. Obviously, this sort of thing is unavailable when discussing creation.

But, we do have proof! Our evidence is of the same sort that is used to prove any historical event which cannot be repeated. How would you, for instance, prove that George Washington was the first president of the United States, the sinking of the Titanic, or terror attack on the World Trade Center in 2001? You can't repeat the events, but you can come to a clear and definite conclusion that they actually happened. We believe the same thing is true about God's obvious creative work.

But, if we're really going to talk about 'blind leaps of faith', consider the folks who believe in the 'big bang' and the theory of evolution. They have no proof at all. In fact, those ideas violate the basic laws of science, and don't even demonstrate common logic!

- by Greg Gwin