

Improve Your Life

1. Turn off the TV and read your Bible. The Psalmist said of the blessed man, "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Ps. 1:2).
2. Hang up the phone and pray. I never cease to be amazed at how much time some people spend on their cell phones. Is all that talking necessary or profitable? "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (Jas. 5:16).
3. Get up out of bed an hour earlier and come to Bible study on Sunday. "As the door turns on its hinges, so does the sluggard on his bed" (Prov. 26:14).
4. Cut down your credit card purchases and give. Give to the poor. Increase your contribution at church. "One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his good deed" (Prov. 19:17). "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).
5. Change the conversation from sports, weather, and politics to spiritual things. Do that at home. "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:6-7). Do that at work, too. "He who wins souls is wise" (Prov. 11:30).

- by Frank Himmel

That Familiar Ring of Truth

The preacher's topic: "The Conversion of Saul." But why that topic? Aren't most of us familiar with that? Shouldn't the preacher choose something new and more challenging? Why preach what is familiar?

1. It confirms convictions we have formed through the years. Most of us have strong beliefs concerning what a sinner needs to do to be saved, what constitutes the pattern set by the apostles for each local church, what the Lord wants of us on a daily basis, and on many other issues. When we hear sermons confirming these convictions, it builds our confidence that we are indeed doing the Lord's will and strengthens our hope of eternal life.
2. It conforms our teaching to the example of the apostles. Peter wrote that he was reminding his readers of certain things, that he would continue to do so, and that he would see to it that they would continue to "have a reminder of these things after my decease" (2 Peter 1: 12-15). Peter knew that Christians need to hear the truth - familiar truth - again and again.
3. It builds convictions in those who are young and those who are new in the faith. There are reasons why we who have been Christians for many years are familiar with these scriptures. It is because of the preaching we have heard since our youth. Today's young people and newer converts need this same opportunity.
4. It thrills listeners to hear again that which has brought joy to them in the past. A sports fan views a rerun of an exciting game his team has won. He knows exactly the moment when the running back scoots through the defense and scores a touchdown. He knows when that moment is near, and he can't wait to see it again. It never gets old to him. So it is when we love the scriptures. We rejoice to hear the message. It never grows old. We anticipate certain scriptures and points that are about to be presented. We never tire of the old, old story.

Catherine Hankey said it this way:

I love to tell the story,
For those who know it best
Seem hungering and thirsting
To hear it like the rest;
And when, in scenes of glory,
I sing the new, new song,

It will be the old, old story
That I have loved so long.

Our purpose is not "to tell or to hear some new thing," as seems to be the trend. Our purpose is to preach truth. If we are bored with that message, something is wrong with us spiritually. If we need to apologize anytime we preach it, something is wrong with our audience. The ring of truth! The **familiar** ring of truth! Preach it, Brother! We thank God for the joy of hearing it again and again.

- by **Bill Hall**

Greener on the Other Side

The scene is a common one: a cow with her head stuck through a fence reaching as far as she can for lush mouthfuls of green grass. In fact, so common is the sight that a well-worn expression has resulted. We've all heard that 'the grass is greener on the other side of the fence'. The saying is used metaphorically to describe someone who is not content where they are – always looking for something different (better as they see it) just beyond the confines of their present situation.

Unfortunately, Christians in a local church are sometimes known to seek the 'greener pastures'. They grow discontent with the situation in their own congregation and see other churches that they imagine are better. This frequently results in them leaving 'here' and going 'there' in hopes of finding something more to their liking.

These folks typically do not stop to recognize or appreciate the good things where they are. They seem oblivious to the work and effort of their faithful brethren, and discount the efforts being made. We would encourage them to 'stop and smell the roses' where they are.

Furthermore, those who are inclined to 'fly the coop' most often do so without making any serious effort to improve the perceived issues in the initial congregation. All churches have problems – including the one where they might eventually 'land'. Mature Christians know this and will not walk away from a local church without trying hard to help make the needed changes.

Sometimes leaving a congregation is the right decision – but it is a decision that should not be taken lightly. A sense of 'family' loyalty ought to exist among spiritual brothers and sisters that will make this a last option rather than a first one.

'Greener on the other side'? Maybe. But if you look around, you might just realize that you are 'knee deep' in a wonderful situation. Think!

- by **Greg Gwin**