

**Concerning one's knowledge before baptism. . .**

## **How Much Is Enough?**

How much should a person know before being baptized into Christ? It's a good question, and one we need to consider as we teach people the gospel. On the one hand, some accounts of conversions in Acts seem to imply a very introductory understanding of the facts about Jesus. Cornelius (Acts 10) and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16) were baptized at their first hearing of the good news, apparently without any in-depth discussion of all that discipleship requires. At least, no such discussion is recorded. On the other hand, biblical teaching about repentance and the costs of discipleship needs to be made clear to the prospective Christian before they make an ill-informed commitment which they may not be inclined to keep. Obviously, they cannot be fully advised of every difficult spot in the road to heaven that they will encounter. But they need to be aware that *"we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God"* (Acts 14:22), and that anything less than total devotion to Christ is useless.

This seems to be the point of some of our Lord's teaching. Please read Luke 9:57-62 and 14:25-35, where Jesus bluntly insists that one must be prepared to give up everything to follow Him. Repentance itself involves change — something that many people are simply not intending to do. Unfaithful Christians are sometimes Christians who didn't make this fundamental commitment at the start, only to find somewhere down the road that Christ demands more than they are willing to give.

The rich young ruler (Mk. 10) might have made a 'good' lukewarm Christian. But Jesus saved him the trouble. We do no one a favor by watering down a message that will face them, undiluted, in judgment.

**- by Jim King**

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## **Is God Pleased With Just Any Religion?**

Often we hear people told to "attend the church of your choice." Or we hear that churches are changing to "meet the needs" of the community, or to make their worship "more relevant to modern man" in order to attract people who might be dissatisfied or bored with traditional forms of worship. In practice, churches often try to make worship more "relevant" by adding things that the worshippers will find entertaining. But what is often lost in these efforts is a simple question: *whom is the church supposed to please?*

In Galatians 1:10, Paul asked, "Do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ." Paul knew that trying to please people instead of God always leads to apostasy. Too often, religious practice is determined by asking, "What do people want?" rather than, "What did God say?" But being a child of God comes from following "not the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). The point of worship is to please God, not to entertain the audience.

In Exodus 32, Moses was receiving the Law on Mount Sinai, and the people grew impatient. They demanded that Aaron allow them to worship in their own way. He agreed and proclaimed "a feast to the Lord" (32:5). When Moses came down, he found the people dancing and making merry and worshipping. Their worship was a feast to the Lord that was contemporary, relevant, entertaining, and suited to their desire, but God was prepared to destroy them for it. God told them (Deut. 12:29-32) not to be attracted to the worship they saw practiced by the pagans. He told them, "You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way...Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it." It is not enough simply to direct worship to God—our worship to Him must follow His instruction.

In Matthew 15:1-9, Jesus found people who had made their own rules. They were attempting to worship God, but He rejected them because they taught practices that suited themselves. He said, "in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." When deciding how to worship God, do not ask whether something pleases you. Instead, ask whether God has said that it pleases Him. If He has not, then such worship is vain.

**- by Erin Percell**

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## **Consider this...**

*“Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease” (Proverbs 22:10).*

Would my home, the place where I work, or the church where I am a member be more peaceful and harmonious if I were “cast out?” If I am a scoffing, murmuring, complaining scorner, they would be. Is it not a sad thought to think that life might be better for others if I were not present?

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## **Parents: Consistency is a Key!**

All godly parents are concerned about bringing up their children to be good, God-fearing people. In fact, we are commanded to do so (Ephesians 6:4).

There are lots of negative influences in the world that make this an increasingly difficult job. We worry about the impact of the schools, peer pressure, wickedness in the media, etc. In the face of all these forces that seek to ruin our kids, how can we succeed in teaching and training them to do what is right?

While there are many Scriptural principles that might be mentioned here, we want to emphasize just one --consistency. A key in bringing up faithful children is to be consistent.

An obvious area where this consistency needs to be seen is in attendance at the assemblies. If you allow your kids to miss the worship services in order to be at a ball game, you are teaching them that the ball game is more important than the Lord. If you let them skip the assemblies for school functions, band trips, dramas or plays, or to go camping, fishing or hunting, in all of these ways you are demonstrating that there are things that are more important than God. If you fail to worship when you are traveling or on vacation, you are showing them that serving God is something you do only when it is convenient. If you let them take part-time jobs that interfere with their attendance, you are giving them a clear sign that work and career considerations are higher in priority than spiritual things.

Many parents who are violating the principles stated above will scoff at these warnings. Yet the personal experiences of many people, as well as the plain teachings of God’s Word indicate that this is the truth.

Joshua had it right when he said, *“as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”* (Joshua 24:15). There would be no compromise in his family. He would **LEAD** them in a consistent, faithful path. Let’s imitate his example of consistency!

**- by Greg Gwin**

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