

The Power of Simplicity

Jesus Christ had a deep appreciation for simple things. His teaching was profound, but always simple. He reached the hearts of His hearers, not with high-sounding philosophical jargon, but with illustrations and "to the point" teaching. He could see in a farmer sowing his seed, or a lily showing forth its beauty, or a shepherd leaving his flock to seek one lost sheep, or a loving father welcoming a wayward son, a lesson that could teach some spiritual truth.

His apostles were chosen from the humble class. He could appreciate people, not for what they possessed, but for what they were; and, in some cases, not for what they were, but for what they could become. He recognized true quality, and true quality is often found in the simple and humble.

The worship He ordained was simple in nature. "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul... spoke to them ..." (**Acts 20:7**). Even the poorest could worship, for all that was required of a material nature was a little bread and fruit of the vine. Those of little talent could worship, for God was listening in view of the heart rather than the beauty of the voice.

He authorized a simple organization for His church, with each congregation appointing its own bishops and deacons (**Philippians 1:1**). There were no denominational associations, conferences, or synods. There were no inter-church organizations or societies. Yet, through the simple organization given the church by the Lord, the world of the first century was thoroughly evangelized and the needy among them provided for. The Lord knew that success in His work would not be brought about through complexity of organization, but through dedication, faith, and commitment on the part of His followers. We make a terrible mistake when we try to substitute the former for the latter.

Why this simplicity? "That no flesh should glory in His presence" (**1 Corinthians 1:29**). The complex systems which men devise tend to bring glory to themselves rather than to God.

To return to the simplicity which our Lord ordained might not be impressive to the worldly-minded, but, then, Jesus Himself is not very impressive to the worldly-minded. Besides, our purpose is not to impress the worldly-minded, but to please God and bow in submission to His will. Let us do away with our super projects and complex systems. Let us learn to appreciate simple teaching and simple ways. Above all, let us learn to appreciate Bible teaching and Bible ways.

Someone has said: "How foolish we are to think that God will be impressed with our voices when we sing; after all, He hears the angels sing! How foolish to think He will be impressed with our cathedrals; remember, He made the Grand Canyon!" What He is seeking for is a heart that is pure, loving, and obedient to His will. And that's simple.

- by **Bill Hall**

Methods of Growth

The denominational world uses many methods to bring about growth of a congregation. Here are some such worldly methods:

"Come as you are" method. This means that you won't have to give up sin and sinfulness. You can continue in adultery, still drink and swear, and you can keep your own moral standards.

"Have fun" method. Youth parties and games comprise a great deal of the total work of the congregation. Gymnasiums, social halls, kitchens and other such facilities are built. Banquet tables, sports equipment and uniforms, etc., are major church expenditures.

"Believe as you please" method. This requires no conviction. It allows you to take your choice: Was Jesus God's Son, or just an exceptionally good man? Is baptism immersion, or sprinkling? Is Jesus coming again, or not? Is there really a heaven and hell? Take your choice—believe as you please.

Naturally, by such processes many unlearned people (those who don't know what the Bible actually teaches) and many unstable ones (those who don't care what the Bible teaches) are led into such churches. Rapid growth is seen.

On the other hand, notice some scriptural methods that are designed to make a congregation grow:

“Practice what you preach” method. Preach the truth, the whole and unadulterated truth, and then live it out in the lives of the people who make up the congregation (see Rom. 2:21-24).

“Let your light shine” method. The power of influence from lives of devoted Christians will attract others. Doing good to all men (Gal. 6:10) and keeping oneself unspotted from the world (Jas. 1:27) makes a Christian useful and fruitful in bringing others to Christ.

“Be awake” method. Enthusiasm is contagious. Some people have just enough religion to make them miserable. The real Christian will be zealous and devoted (Rev. 3:19). His life will radiate with love for God and man. His influence will bring others to Christ through the gospel.

- by Leslie Diestelkamp

Loyalty

When Potiphar’s wife tempted Joseph to commit fornication, he resisted her lascivious advances by expressing 1) his commitment to God, and 2) his loyalty to his earthly master. Note: *“But (Joseph) refused, and said unto his master’s wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”* (Genesis 39:8-9) Joseph’s example of deep devotion to God is often noted, and rightfully so, but his loyalty to his master is also worthy of our imitation.

It seems that loyalty has largely become a lost virtue. We see signs that people lack this necessary trait in many areas. For instance, this lack of loyalty is seen in family breakdowns where mates violate their marriage vows, and when parents fail to nurture and protect their children. We also see disloyalty in regards to people’s jobs, our nation, one’s friends, etc.

But we are especially concerned to see a lack of loyalty on the part of Christians. In particular, we sense this failure as it applies to our relationships in the local congregation. Yes, our primary devotion is to God, but there should also be a fidelity to our brothers and sisters in our spiritual family. Too many are ready to ‘up and leave’ over the slightest upset or disagreement. Others will abandon even long standing associations on a whim. This ought not to be.

Do problems arise in a local church fellowship? Of course! Will we have to deal with issues and conflicts from time to time? Certainly! But, our loyalty to those we love in the local congregation should provide plenty of motivation to work through even the most difficult troubles.

It is hard to imagine Christians of the first century walking out on each other over some the petty things that separate brethren today. Can you picture them acting like some modern church members do? What would they say about us? Think!

- by Greg Gwin