

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

'He Preached Right At Me'

I have heard this statement made many times by individuals who have just heard a sermon presented which exposed some wrong in their lives. Did you ever wonder why anyone would feel that the preacher had "preached right at" him?

Suppose the preacher has just preached against lying. Who in the audience will feel that he has preached right at him? It could only be one who is guilty of lying. The same would hold true on any other subject.

What we need to do is examine the things taught in the light of God's word. If we find them to be true we should accept them. If they expose some wrong in our life we need to change and thank God that there is someone concerned enough about our soul to teach us what we need to hear.

-by James Hahn

Gossip's Corrupt Fruit

"GOSSIP" is idle talk or rumors about others. The word can also be applied to the person who initiates or repeats such idle talk.

Many jokes are made about gossip. Some seem to view gossip as a harmless exercise -- an annoyance or nuisance at worst.

Christians should realize that gossip (slander, tale bearing, being a busy body) is sinful and carries with it the potential of much heartache and devastation. The sinfulness and seriousness of gossip is clearly illustrated by its effects which are listed in a number of scriptures.

1. Gossip makes a fool of the one who practices it. "...he that uttereth a slander is a fool",

Proverbs 10:18.

2. Gossip causes deep wounds. "The words of a tale bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly", Proverbs 26:22.

3. Gossip will separate close friends. "A forward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends", Proverbs 16:28.

4. Gossip brings shame upon the tale bearer. "Debate thy cause with thy neighbor himself; and disclose not a secret to another: lest he that heareth it put thee to shame and thine infamy turn not away", Proverbs 25:9-10.

If you are tempted to gossip, work on purifying your heart (because evil speech proceeds from the heart, Matthew 15:18-20), increase your love for others, and learn to use your speech "to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers", Ephesians 4:29.

- by Tom Moody

"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