

Emphasizing Basics

If the Lord's church is to survive and prosper, it must never depart from the basics of the gospel.

A wise and experienced elder once told me, "I've never known a church to grow that didn't emphasize the basics. If a church is struggling, they just need to get back to first principles and preach them like the people have never heard them before." That was good advice.

If Christians do not have a basic understanding of the elementary principles of the gospel, they have no solid foundation on which to build and grow. One of Christ's parables spoke of the need of making certain that we build on the right foundation (see Matt. 7: 24-27). That reminds us of the importance of teaching some of the same lessons over and over again.

There are several reasons for this: First, there are always young people growing up who have heard these lessons from the time of their birth. But, at a very young age, most of these studies do not sink in. At some point (and really, only God knows when it will be), a lesson that young people have heard numerous times finally takes hold and they understand an important truth for the very first time. We should never assume that our young people know and understand Bible subjects just because we know they have heard them before.

Secondly, we can never be sure when a visitor will show up and, perhaps, hear a vital Bible lesson at a crucial time in his life. It may be the first and only time that person will ever have the opportunity to understand an important doctrinal point, which could make the difference in his eternal destiny. That's also why we should make certain to explain the plan of salvation during a lesson every time. You just don't know who may be listening carefully and seriously considering obedience. He might have listened many times in the past, have done nothing about what he was learning, and still be receptive this time.

Also, we must not assume that our older members (not in age, necessarily, but those who have been around a while) can always remember everything they've ever heard. It might have been a long time since they have studied a particular subject or they might be aware of the truth but not know where the verses are that teach that truth. It is always helpful to be reminded of things we know to be true so that our convictions are deep and not easily shaken. These things help to mature and stabilize us spiritually "till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:13,14).

There will be certain subjects that we will never outgrow. We must never be afraid to preach lessons that members have heard many times. When someone has been a Christian for several years, there is almost no way to preach something new to him. As people have said, "If it's new, it isn't true and if it's true, it isn't new."

No matter how much "strong meat" of the word people can handle, those who are the most mature spiritually will never grow tired of hearing these basic principles of truth, because they know how important they are. They love all truth and do not have to be entertained with "some new thing" all the time.

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food" (Heb. 5:12). If people are not growing spiritually, if the church is struggling with carnality and division, if souls are not being saved, look first at the preaching. Maybe we need to just get back to the basics.

- by Roger Hillis

Are You Noble?

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Could Luke describe us as noble-minded? Let's see:

- Is it our goal to do what is right regardless of the consequences?

- Are we willing to be guided by the scriptures rather than by our own preconceived beliefs?
- Do we search the scriptures to learn the truth rather than to prove ourselves right?
- Are we willing to accept the truth thus learned, and to stand for it?

If we would not do these things, we would be out of place among the Christians at Berea.

- by *Rick Duggin*

Can We See The Bible Alike?

Moses said we could (Deut. 29:29). David said we could (Ps. 119:104). John said we could (Jn. 20:30,31). Jesus prayed that we might (Jn. 17:20). All of these spokesmen for God have declared that through study of the Scriptures we are enabled to see them alike.

There are some things that **HINDER** a clear understanding of the Bible:

- Relatives (Matt. 19:29; 10:34-37)
- Pride (Prov. 14:12; 16:18; Rev. 3:17-18)
- Majority opinion (Ex. 23:2; Matt. 7:13-14,21)
- False doctrines (Matt. 13:14-15; 2 Thess. 2:9-12)
- Satan (2 Cor. 4:3-4)

If we will accept only the word of God (1 Pet. 4:11), we would not only see the Bible alike, but understand and practice it alike (1 Cor. 1:10).

- by *Johnny Polk*

No Rules!

The concept of 'no rules' seems initially appealing to many people. Just think – you can do whatever you want, whenever you want, wherever you want. Wonderful!

But, wait, if I can do whatever, whenever, wherever, then so can everyone else. That means that their actions may impact upon me. They might decide to take my car, burn my house, or steal my children. If there are 'no rules,' then they can do anything, and there is no basis to stop them.

Rules, we come to realize, are extremely necessary. My rights, my property, in fact my very existence depend upon rules. Without them, 'civilization' would come to an end.

Religion is no different. Rules are clearly necessary. If allowed to do whatever we want, there is no end to the chaos that results. The confused and divided religious world of our day is a testimony against the misguided notion that man should do as he pleases when it comes to serving God.

How can we know what is right? How can we be assured that God is pleased? On what basis can we judge that certain religious deeds are proper and others are wrong? Surely these matters cannot be left to the subjective feelings of men. The 'I'm OK, you're OK' approach is a proven failure. There must be something objective and certain that will direct us as we seek God.

The objective standard we seek is the inspired Word of God. It is a "light to our path, and a lamp to our feet" (Ps. 119:105). God's word is the truth (Jn. 17:17) that can make us free (Jn. 8:32).

With the divinely delivered 'rule book' in hand, we must respect it and comply with its regulations. This would include 'speaking where the Bible speaks, and being silent where the Bible is silent' (1 Pet. 4:11), and demanding 'book, chapter, and verse' for everything we do (Col. 3:17). Anything less will lead to the anarchy of 'no rules.'

- by *Greg Gwin*