

Teaching the Old Lessons

Every once in a while, some well-meaning but misguided brother will chide us for teaching the old lessons. He will say, "You are answering questions which no one is asking any longer." By this he means to squelch our teaching on the first principles of Gospel obedience and salvation by grace through faith; the nature, organization, and work of the church; Biblical morality; and the need for scriptural authority.

Of course, we understand that some people aren't asking questions like, "*What must I do to be saved?*" as people did in Bible days (Acts 16:30). However, not everyone raised such an important question back then, either. Just because men ask the wrong questions, or they don't ask any question at all does not mean that we must alter our teaching to accommodate the "felt needs" of the people of our time.

Haven't people always clamored for something new, novel, different, and more exciting? Of course, we have. We do like to hear new things, even strange things. A skilled teacher of God's word will be careful to "clothe old truths in new robes", just as a good cook will find new and interesting ways to prepare and serve potatoes. Yet, the truth is still the truth. Its nature and essence never changes. We might present it differently or we might approach the teaching of truth by some new methods, but in the end the old truths will be clearly stated.

Older, more mature Christians must learn to be patient as the old lessons are taught again and again. There is always a new generation coming on, or a new convert here and there who needs the lessons we think we know all too well. If we insist on teaching something novel and exciting, what will happen to the people who are yet untaught? Do they not now need the same lessons today's mature Christians needed when they were novices? Judges 2:10 states of Israel, following the days of Joshua, "*All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.*" Even Jeremiah encouraged the people of his day to ask for the "*old paths*" (6:16). However, most of the people to whom Jeremiah recommended this course rejected it and as a result, ended up in a seventy-year captivity among the Babylonians. Jeremiah preached that the "*good way*" was to be found in the "*old paths*".

It is no compliment to us when many of our young people in some churches have not even been given the opportunity of hearing the old lessons. It isn't that they reject the teaching, they've just never been exposed to it! Elders and preachers who have served up the novel and new while neglecting the tried and true will pay for their negligence, to be sure. Besides, if someone is preaching something new and novel, shouldn't that be examined closely to see whether it is indeed, truth? (Acts 17:11)

We must not grow weary of the old truths which distinguish the people of God. Spiritual ignorance will be the cause of our destruction both now and eternally. If we neglect the old lessons, the church which results will lose its distinctiveness and the identity which God has given it.

- by Mark W. White

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 (or more) 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 very little different from our neighbors then our "light" gets rather difficult to notice.

But if people learn self-denial (Luke 9:23), learn submission to God and care for neighbor (Matthew 22), learn to be servants (John 13), learn to be content (1 Timothy 6:8), learn to invest in family (Titus 2:5; Ephesians 6:4, Proverbs 22:6), and learn to clean out the inside of the cup, not just the outside (Matthew 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 Peter 2:9-12).

"Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God ... and be not fashioned according to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 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 Peter 1:15). And when people become that kind of light, it creates a great evangelistic tool.

And it will far exceed the effect of debates, radio, tv, and mail outs.

- by Scott Smelser

"High Maintenance"

From time to time you might hear someone described as "high maintenance." It could be a man referring to his girlfriend, or a husband discussing his wife (or vice versa). The phrase might be used in regards to any person who shares a relationship with others.

The meaning of this expression is this: this individual requires constant attention. They expect and demand that others will attend to their every whim and expectation. Typically, these people will not do anything for others, because it seems that it never crosses their mind to think about what someone else might want or need. Their total emphasis is on "me, me, me!"

Unfortunately, there are some members of the church who are "high maintenance." These are the folks who are always complaining about things that they feel should have been done for them:

- a.. "I was sick, and no one came to see me."
- b.. "I was overlooked when someone was selected for....."
- c.. "I've never been invited to _____ 's house for a meal."
- d.. "I wasn't included when some others made plans to....."
- e.. Etc., etc., etc.

A little investigation will show that this "high maintenance" individual has never done any of these things for anyone else. Usually these folks are not particularly friendly, almost never show hospitality, don't visit the sick, never see about the needs of others, and generally ignore any situation that doesn't involve their own interests or desires. They are self-centered and full of self-pity.

Such folks need to learn to look outside their own circle, to realize that "self" is not the most important thing. Paul said it this way: "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:3-5).

- by Greg Gwin