

Are You Tired of All the Gimmicks?

People should be insulted by all the gimmicks that churches are offering to draw and to keep them. Most of it is directed toward families, the children in particular. I speak of all the secular, non-religious, non-spiritual gimmicks -- the picnics, luncheons and suppers, the parties, the sports teams, the fun and games, the square dances, the clubs and socials, the diet and exercise classes, and the fund-raising dinners and bazaars offered by churches. Classes and services that used to be purely religious are given new appearances with gimmickry.

Don't the people realize that the churches are saying, in effect, "We know that purely spiritual or religious activities and services, involving worshipping God, teaching and learning His word, edifying and being edified spiritually, are not enough to draw and to keep you. So we are featuring all these other secular activities in which you are probably more interested and adding a little religion to them and calling them 'Christian fellowship.' We are willing to compromise to get our crowd."

So churches cease to be churches and become more like social, recreational, athletic, health, or craft clubs. The Church of Christ is still a church, and we do not resort to gimmickry. We are trying to be like the churches you read about in the New Testament, not the churches around us.

- by Bill Crews

Things You Will Never See At a Pentecostal "Healing" Service

- One raised from the dead, like Jesus did (John 11:38-44)
- The blind made to see, like Jesus did (John 9:1-12)
- The deaf made to hear, like Jesus did (Mark 7:31-37)
- The lame made to walk, like Jesus did (Mark 2:1-12)
- An ear restored, like Jesus did (Luke 22:49-51)
- A leper cleansed, like Jesus did (Matt. 8:1-4)
- A withered hand restored, like Jesus did (Matt. 12:9-13)
- False teachers struck blind, like Paul did (Acts 13:8-12)
- Order maintained, like Paul commanded (1 Cor. 14:26-40)

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

- by David Padfield

Three Answers to One Question

Could one question be given three differing answers, and all answers be correct? Seems unlikely doesn't it? Yet this is the case in the N.T. book of Acts when the question, "What must I do?" (to be saved) is asked.

The expressed answer given to the Philippian jailer was "Believe!" (See Acts 16:25-34 for full account.) Some insist that this expressed reply is complete, and hence salvation is by faith only. However, a consideration of the expressed replies given this question on other occasions will show the fallacy of such reasoning.

When some of the Pentecost multitude asked, "What shall we do?" they were told, "Repent, and be baptized." (See Acts 2:6-38 for details.) And when Saul asked what to do he was directed to Ananias, who told him to "Arise, and be, baptized." (See Acts 9:1-18; 22:6-16 for the record.)

If only the expressed reply is to be considered we would have to conclude that the jailer was saved by faith alone, and that those on Pentecost were saved by repentance and baptism (i.e., without any faith) and that Saul was saved by baptism alone -- without either faith or repentance. Of course none of these conclusions are valid.

Why Did The Answers Differ?

Because the questions were asked by people in different circumstances. A man in Burnet, Texas, may ask "how far is it to San Antonio?" and be told, "100 miles." In Marble Falls this question would get a different answer. And in Blanco, the same question would get a third, and different answer. Yet all would be part of one great truth.

There is no indication that the Philippian jailer had either knowledge or faith in the Christian system; so he was told to believe, and then "they spake unto him the word of the Lord." He repented, as indicated by washing their stripes; and he was baptized, as stated in Acts 16:38. Thus he truly believed (vs. 34). But those on Pentecost heard the preaching of Christ before they asked their question. The preaching "pricked their hearts;" i.e., they believed. Then they were told repent and be baptized." And Saul (later called Paul) had already believed, and had spent three days penitently praying, when he was told, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins."

Where Are You?

Your status or condition before God must be considered in answering your question, "What must I do?" The Lord will save "all who will obey" (Heb. 5:9) and has given one gospel to all (Gal. 1:8; Rom. 2:11). Have you proven your faith by full and complete obedience to His will?

- by Robert F. Turner

Strangers and Pilgrims

Traveling in a foreign country is an enlightening thing. There is always a "culture shock" associated with the experience. Things we consider normal are regarded as very odd there, and vice versa. Traditions, customs, life styles, clothes, etc., are often very different. Language barriers are always a big problem. And the food -- WOW!!! Things that we would regard as inedible and disgusting are sometimes viewed as fine delicacies in those places. (On one trip abroad we were treated to horsemeat, goat and raw fish!)

We make this point simply to emphasize the obvious. When you are a stranger in a foreign land the things there seem odd to you -- and you appear odd to the native people. For this reason we often say, "There's no place like home."

There is a spiritual application to these observations. As the people of God we are described as "strangers and pilgrims" here in this world (1 Peter 2:11). As such, we must realize that we operate on a much different set of 'norms.' People of the world will often dress, talk, and act in ways that are -- or should be -- odd to us. On the other hand, worldly people will see us as being very peculiar -- or, at least they should. We're different. We don't do things the same way they do. We don't think and act as they do.

If we begin to feel too comfortable with the ways of the world -- if we begin to adopt the norms of those around us -- then we have lost the unique identity that the Lord wants us to possess. He warns us: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15). We need to be like the great heroes of faith who "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth," and, like them, we should constantly "desire a better country, that is, an heavenly" (Hebrews 11:13,16).

Christian, where is your country? Where is your 'home?' Think!