

THE NEED FOR TEACHING THE FUNDAMENTALS

The church is composed of imperfect people. If the church was designed only for perfect people, then the church would be imperfect because as Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:2,3). The apostle John added, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:10). So, the church as designed by God takes imperfect people whom Peter called "babes" and builds them up in the faith (1 Peter 2:1-2). Just as the nutrients from the various food groups provide energy for the physical body to grow, even so the Word of God provides the power which allows each member of the church to grow toward maturity. On one occasion Job commented that God's Words were regarded of greater value than his own physical food. He said, "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12).

Steps of Faith

The ancient patriarch Abraham carefully walked in steps of faith as directed by the word of God (Romans 4:12). He is heralded in the Book of Hebrews for all he did "by faith" (Hebrews 11). The only source of faith today is the Word of God. Paul wrote, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Like Abraham, God is calling people today by means of the gospel to begin a walk of faith (2 Thessalonians 2:14). The gospel of Christ is God's power to save the sinner, but he must first hear the gospel (Romans 1:16; Ephesians 1:13). Second, the gospel message must be believed, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10a). Third, since sin separates the soul from God, repentance from sin is commanded from Christ (Isaiah 59:1,2; Luke 13:3). Fourth, confession of faith in Christ is done unto salvation for "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10b). Fifth, baptism by immersion in water for the remission of sins as commanded by Christ puts on into Christ where all spiritual blessings are and adds the believer to the church of Christ (Colossians 2:12; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:16; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 1:3; Acts 2:47).

Growth Demands Faith

Upon becoming an obedient child of God that believer is now ready to grow. Peter admonished, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18). Just as the basic steps of faith taken to bring a person into Christ must emerge from the word of God, even so the spiritual growth of the new Christian must come about as he is taught the fundamentals of the faith.

No Growth Outside of the Faith

In order for the child of God to grow spiritually he must increase his faith in God. Jude wrote, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 20,21). Upon being confronted with the Lord's teaching which dealt with resolving offenses between brethren, the apostles made a fitting request wherein they said, "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). Faith is increased as one reads and studies his Bible (Revelation 1:3; 2 Timothy 2:15). The resulting spiritual growth is a Divine production. The apostle Peter taught,

"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ: grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness,

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

SEEKING HOPE IN A HOPELESS WORLD

Text: _____

I. _____ For _____

Notes:

II. _____ For _____

Notes:

III. _____ For _____

Notes:

CHRIST'S CONCERN FOR THE CHURCH

Text: _____

I. That She Might Respect _____

Notes:

II. That She Might Respect _____

Notes:

III. That She Might Respect _____

Notes:

through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:1-4).

One Faith

Personal spiritual growth is produced by the system of faith which is heaven sent. There is only one Divine system of faith. Paul wrote about "one faith" in Ephesians 4:5. This "one faith" is not in a state of development or constantly changing, for Jude wrote, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

Conclusion

The need which exists is for teaching the fundamentals of this one system of faith that is presented exclusively within the pages of God's inspired word.

-Gary McDade

EVERY MAN'S BOOK

The Bible is every man's book. To know the Bible and to handle it aright is the greatest accomplishment within the reach of any person. One may know English, astronomy, literature, music, sociology, and philosophy; but if one does not know the Bible, one has failed in the only subject that brings all things into their proper relationship and that enables one to know life at its best.

It is not intended for some special group. But not only is the Bible every man's book, it is written for the average person. Scholars may study it, but it is not written necessarily with scholars in mind. No one every outgrows the Scriptures. The more one studies them, the wider and deeper they become. The Bible is a book which enables one to look into eternity. The best evidence of the inspiration of the Bible is to be found between its covers.

No one will every be a useful Christian unless one is a student of the Bible. Matthew Henry said, "The Scriptures were not written to make us astronomers, but to make us saints." It is no wonder that Paul urged Timothy to study the Scripture, "rightly dividing" (handling aright) the word of truth, that he might be an approved workman before God (2 Timothy 2:15).

The Bible acknowledges man's faults; it is patient with man's weaknesses; and it is honest with his virtues and his hopes.

To own the Bible is to be rich. To study, to know, and to trust the Bible is to find life. To study the Bible is to be wise; to obey it, to be strong.

-Franklin Camp

MORE LIKE JESUS EVERY DAY

A child's likeness to a parent is often recognizable by certain attributes, habits, peculiarities, or otherwise that they share. For instance, a mother and daughter may have a similar interest in shopping. Thus when that girl is likened to her parents, she is stated as being "more like mommy every day." What is the origin of that similarity? Surely we know that it is not inherited. Many attributes similar to those of parents are inherited such as skin color, eye color, hair color, etc. However, a girl's interest in shopping surely is not. It is, though, a learned trait. The case is likely that the two have spent a significant amount of time together in pursuit of this pastime and the daughter, because of her proximity to her mother, developed that similar trait. Such illustrates the glorious truth that in righteous pursuits, time spent is well spent.

I have in my life known (and do know) men and women, children of God, who are, similarly, "more like Jesus every day." What is meant is that their personality, character, influence, compassion, etc. so greatly resembles that which Jesus portrays in scripture. How could such similarities exist? Again, we know they are not inherited. Sin is not inherited (Ezekiel 18:20), but neither is righteousness. No, I think rather, that the explanation for such is that they spent a significant amount of time "with the Lord" in prayer and in the scriptures, pursuing a closer proximity to the personality, character, influence, compassion, etc. of Jesus. Peter would say it this way: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever" (2 Peter 3:18). The two concepts are irrevocably connected. To be more like Jesus demands growth in grace and in knowledge. And growth in grace and in knowledge will produce an individual who is more like Jesus. If that is not the goal of every Christian then their course has been unrighteously altered and they have forgotten their purpose looking toward eternity. A girl's similarity to her mother is an innocent result. A Christian's likeness to Jesus must be an expected and anticipated plan for life. What are some areas in which we should grow to become more like Jesus every day?

We should be more like Jesus every day in PRAYER. I believe it can be safely said that Jesus is the Bible's foremost example in the area of prayer. He is spoken of often as retreating from His daily trials to spend time in prayer. He has more prayers recorded in scripture than any other character of scripture. In fact, His prayer life was so prolific and recognized as such by His associates that they requested that He teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1-4). The longest of His recorded prayers is in John 17, but elsewhere He is referenced as spending an entire night praying (Luke 6:12). What a testament it is to an individual when they pattern prayer lives after their Master. Paul's admonition was for Christians to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). In other words, he wanted us to recognize the power of prayer and to not give up on its usage. Prayer is a privilege, and it is one that should be put to use every day. In that sense, we can be more like Jesus every day.

We should be more like Jesus every day in PURITY. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all point tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth..." (1 Peter 2:21-22). "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens..." (Hebrews 7:26). Each statement in the preceding verses are spoken of Jesus, the sinless Son of God. And as Peter indicated, His suffering and sinlessness served as an example to us in our pursuit for purity. It is very difficult to withstand the world's pressures, but it is very possible. Sometimes we have to "just say no!" When we commit ourselves to that, we become more like Jesus every day.

We should be more like Jesus every day in PASSION. It was Jesus who on one occasion stated the epitome of what true brotherly love is. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:13). Can a greater display of affection possibly be imagined. The willingness to sacrifice one's own life pictures a passion beyond comprehension, and yet that is exactly the degree of passion that Jesus had and has for the souls of mankind. The greatest display of love is self sacrifice, but how many are unwilling to show simple signs of affection to others? Such surely shall bear consequences that are eternal (Matthew 25:41-45). But by seeking to show the love of God to those around us inasmuch as we possibly can, we become more like Jesus every day.

There can surely be no more honorable pursuit than to pattern ourselves after Jesus Christ. Such, though, only is possible by careful consideration and application of those principles displayed in the life of the Lord. May it be said of us all that we become more like Jesus every day.