

THE MAIN THING

There is among many a traditional thought, that before we can do anything great for the Lord that we need to have great bible knowledge. Believers can be overawed by the amount of information they need to digest before apparently being able to be useful to the Lord.

Obviously, there are incredible truths in the bible but is it just possible that in our search for more knowledge we can bypass some simple basic truths.

Jesus said: ***“Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest in your souls. For My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*** *Matt. 11:28-30.*

Some have found trying to learn and understand the bible isn't so easy. Also, attempting to do everything it tells them to do hasn't brought rest so their failure and consequent guilt has made them restless.

The key to making the Christian life easy and light is, first of all, identifying our role model, the one we are to imitate. Obviously, we can all come up with the correct answer ... Jesus.

He also gives that instruction in this passage **“LEARN FROM ME.”!!!**

Whilst this would seem so elementary, we'll soon see that the simplicity and ease of Jesus' life is not followed by many believers today.

Many of us have labored through the Old Testament trying to find keys and principles for life. Although there are many wonderful and rich truths to be found, Jesus basically summed it up in two statements.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” *Matt. 22:37-40*

Zig Ziglar, a Christian motivationalist, once said; ***“The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.”***

How did Jesus model the main thing for us?

LOVING GOD.

If we asked the average Christian how they expressed their love for God there may be many and varied answers; going to church, praise and worship, tithes and offering, etc. etc. However, we need to go back to our model and see how He loved God. He did in the way that any loving son would love his father.

Any devoted relationship would necessitate having conversations. Jesus would have expressed His feelings for Him and His Dad would do the same. It was obviously a two-way conversation. But apart from this intimate love relationship there was further communication. The Father would direct Jesus on how He was to love others.

“For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. So whatever I say is just what the Father told me to say.” John 12:49-50. N.I.V.

“I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by Himself, He can only do what He sees the Father doing, because whatever the Father does, the Son also does.” John 5:19. N.I.V.

By speaking to Jesus by word or by vision the Son was able to know exactly what to do and how to express His Father’s love toward others through either His words or actions.

“...who went about doing good and healing all...for God was with Him.” Acts 10:38.

Being led directly by His Father enabled Him to do His Dad’s perfect will.

Jesus was modeling what it was like to live under the loving relationship, guidance, counsel, supervision and management of God. He referred to it as Kingdom living.

The word kingdom is made up of two words; King’s and domain. The Kingdom of God is anywhere that God is King. Jesus told others that if they repented of their independence they could also come into this Kingdom, a life of total dependence on the King.

ETERNAL LIFE OR HEAVEN?

He promised them that they could exchange their unfulfilled life for a new way of living or eternal life.

Traditionally many had thought the eternal life was a place (heaven). However, what’s the bible definition?

“Now this is eternal life, that we might know Him the one and only true God and Jesus Christ.” John 17:3

Eternal life is not a place...it’s a life...a life that is everlasting or goes on eternally. When a person is single, they live an independent life. When that person falls in love and gets married, they make a covenant and begin a whole new life with a friend and partner. If they keep their covenant, this life goes on “till death do us part.”

Before we knew the Lord we lived an independent life. We fell in love with Him and made a covenant. A union took place and we started a new life with our friend and partner. This life goes on eternally. This was the gospel of the Kingdom - the good news of this relationship with the King.

Although heaven is real, Jesus’ mission was not to get us to a place...but a place of relationship.

“...that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life...” an ongoing, never ending relationship.

JESUS’ DISCIPLES.

After Jesus’ death, His first disciples had a general command to tell others of this relationship (the gospel of the Kingdom) and how they could enter into it by grace.

Like Jesus, they only wanted to do the perfect will of the Father. They had a general command but how did they know exactly where to go and exactly what to say?

They had an intimate relationship with the Lord and received instructions from Him. They were led by His Spirit. They kept the main thing the main thing.

THE APOSTLE PAUL.

When Paul became a disciple, it was after the death of Jesus. Therefore he didn't have the advantage of watching and interacting with a living model. How did he become a great man of God? He didn't have the books of Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, etc. to meditate on because he hadn't written them at this stage.

He stayed with the main thing. Over a three-year period in the desert he built a relationship with the Lord and the Lord instructed him about what to say and what to do.

When he planted new churches, he quite often stayed only a matter of months. What was it that he imparted to them in such a short time? Because of his relationship with the Lord, he was able to model the Spirit led life and encourage them to do the same.

“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ”. 1 Cor. 11:1

After preaching, teaching and modeling this new way of living, he moved on...**without appointing elders!!**

When the apostles returned and finally did appoint elders, what was the basis for their evaluation? Was it because they had attended bible school for twelve months? Of course not! They were chosen because they now exhibited a Christ-like lifestyle by being led by the Spirit and touching others' lives.

Loving God...loving others. With a simple message and by modeling the life, the apostles released a new group of disciples so excited about their relationship and subsequent empowerment they became known as *“those who have turned the world upside down.” Acts 17:6.*

NEW TESTAMENT TRUTHS.

Please do not think for one minute that we are attempting to belittle the great truths in the New Testament. We are merely pointing out the need to keep the main thing the main thing.

We need to understand the reason why, some years later, Paul and the other disciples wrote letters to the churches and these letters became part of our New Testament. They were written because the churches were straying away from the basics and had to be reminded to get back on track.

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the first principles...” *Heb. 5:12*

Paul wrote further letters which re-emphasized a repentance from independence and the need to replace it with total dependence on God through relationship. He included in it corrections to that would hinder or distract people from the basics of loving God and loving people. In some cases that was the flesh, in others rebellion or false teachers.

He rebuked those who looked back into the Old Testament and were going back under law instead of grace.

Each of the writers in the New Testament wrote to show how easy it was to stray off the main thing, and kept re-emphasizing the simplicity of the original message and modeling of Jesus.

Some of the epistles were written to the academically minded who seemed to have trouble grasping simple truths and receive them as little children. We now have those today who have written entire books explaining what the little letters meant. I am not criticizing the books...as long as they lead us back to the main thing and don't sidetrack us into a path of seeking knowledge for the sake of knowledge.

Today we have the advantage of reading the extra insights of the early apostles and the extra thoughts of those who teach us today, but let us always return to the basics of loving God and loving others.

We read of great revivals and moves of God in third world countries and wonder why we in western nations don't see similar things. Is it possible that those less academically minded in these countries simply stick with the basics? Is it possible that any moves in western countries are eventually stifled because we add more knowledge as a pre-requisite of being good disciples?

TRADITIONAL LOVE.

Traditionally, for many, their interpretation of loving God was expressed by going to worship services on Sunday. The concept of having a personal relationship with the Lord and being led by His Spirit to love others has not been the main thing.

They can feel that by attending a service and;

- Singing songs of praise
- Taking communion in reverence
- Learning the bible through sermons
- Putting their kids through Sunday School
- Giving God some money
- Trying to lead a good life;

that they are fulfilling their love obligations to God.

Going to Christian services is obviously not wrong unless it becomes the focus of their Christian life.

If the apostle Paul were alive today, I wonder what kind of letter he would write to many of those who appear to substitute services for service and meetings for meeting with Him. Surely it would be along the lines of keeping the main thing the main thing.

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