

Spiritual Considerations...

Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.



Dave Phillips, editor

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The Church is the body of Christ

Dave Phillips

Church work is a never-ending task – and aren't you glad? We study God's word to find direction. We work with our brothers and sisters in Christ to find assistance and encouragement. We relate to unbelievers to find strugglers and bring them to Christ. All three of these tasks are demanding. Not one of them is simple. Difficulties can cause us to focus more on problems than possibilities. Our priorities can become blurred if we are not careful.

The following three well-written and thought provoking articles are written by preachers I respect and admire. As you read their thoughts, consider how some might view their conclusions to be contradictory. Are they? I believe these articles provide three perspectives of the same challenge that churches face. We must find balance in our study and application. What a great work God is doing in His church!

Attend to Your Own Business

John Simpson, Memphis, TN

A recorded incident places an adolescent boy in a public park, sitting on a bench happily eating candy. Along came an astute gentleman, dressed in a business suit, who observed the boy and stopped to lecture him on the ills of overindulgence in candy. He began: "Young man, what you are doing can be injurious to your health. Too much sugar can result in becoming obese, which can over-tax your heart and even cause death. Also, it will cause cavities in your teeth, pimples on your face and can result in diabetes." The boy replied, "My grandfather lived to be 102 years old." The man inquired further, "Did he eat a lot of candy?" Without missing a chew, the boy replied: "Nope, he just attended to his own business!"

Often we busy ourselves with questioning the faults or good fortunes of others with little or no thought of the virtue of giving attention to our own affairs. Jesus once reminded Peter not to meddle in the affairs of others, by asking the question: "What is that to you?" (John 21:22). Paul commanded: "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands" (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

Having learned his lesson from the Master early on, Peter wrote in his old age and categorized meddling in the affairs of others – "Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or a thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler" (1 Peter 4:14). This character fault is cast alongside some vicious bedfellows.

Finally, our Lord cast the strongest reprimand: "Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:3-4).

Beyond doubt, we must insist that everyone do the right things as instructed through Scripture. But at the same time we must attend to our own business first.

How Broad?

Cecil May, Jr., Montgomery, AL

“We should broaden our fellowship,” we are told. I agree. Some of us should.

Suppose, though, someone says, “Let’s include the Christian Church, Baptist, Pentecostals, Presbyterians, Methodist, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christadelphians, Hare Krishnas, Mohammedans, Buddhists, Shintos...”

Whoa! Almost (!) no one in our brotherhood is saying that. Virtually everyone excludes some somewhere along in that list. Which makes my point. Most among us who call for a broader fellowship would themselves exclude some.

Many exclude those with whom fellowship would involve participation in what is considered to be unscriptural worship. More exclude those who have not been immersed. Most exclude those who do not believe in Christ.

Are Mormons, Witnesses and Christadelphians included, or is their view of Christ too unorthodox? Are those included who hold membership in a “mainline denomination” but do not believe in Christ’s resurrection? What about those who do not believe in Christ at all? Did Christ tell the truth when he said, “No one comes to the Father except through me”?

Some of what is said about broadening our fellowship implies that the problem is just one of improving attitudes. No doubt in some cases it is.

However, did you exclude anyone in the above list? In your case was it attitude or doctrine?

Doctrine does matter, doesn’t it?

The Exciting Thing

John Gipson, Little Rock, AR

As a youngster, I listened to Winston Churchill’s speeches over the radio during World War II, and was greatly moved. Later, I acquired some tapes of his more famous speeches and was again captivated. That man knew how to hold an audience without a rope. He used words as a general would use his troops marching into battle. It was powerful stuff.

It was not until I read William Manchester’s biography of Winston Spencer Churchill that I learned of the Irish-American lawyer and congressman Bourke Cockran, and the impact his oratory made on Churchill. Cockran advised Churchill that he should avoid scurrility, affectations and cant. He said: “What people really want to hear is the truth – it is the exciting thing- speak the simple truth.”

Plato, centuries before Cockran, stated, “There is nothing so delightful as the hearing or speaking of truth.”

Jesus came into the world speaking the truth and the people heard him gladly. Even those officers sent to arrest him returned without fulfilling their mission. Their explanation? “No man ever spoke like this man!”

Later, the apostles of Jesus would be accused of turning the world upside down. How was it accomplished? Not through military might, intellectual brilliance, or political maneuvering, but truth –simple truth.

In our world, so beguiled by lights, glamour, noise, and motion, nothing could be more exciting than the speaking of truth.