

A Quarterly Journal

(A presentation by email)

“LIGHT FOR OUR AGE”

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*“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”
Psalm 119:105*

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Feature One: Editorial

Do The Little Things Really Matter?

Sometimes today we look at the changes in the church and think, “But the changes in our worship are just little things.” We like to be able to

worship God in a relaxed atmosphere where there is no emphasis put on how we dress, or what we do. What harm could it possibly be as to how dim the lights are during worship? What harm could it possibly be to add an instrument to our worship? What harm could it possibly be if we do most things right and maybe do just a few things wrong? In fact, is there a wrong way to do anything?

Let me begin my answer by referring to Romans 15:4 “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” This passage is telling us that we can understand the nature and work of God by examining how God dealt with Israel. Let us first look at some “little” things from that era.

If we go all the way back to the beginning, we see an example of what some today would consider a “little thing”. Cain offered, according to Hebrews 11:4, an excellent sacrifice to God. We understand this to be accurate by looking at the wording of that verse. “By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts.” When the text says Abel’s sacrifice was “a more acceptable sacrifice” it is using a term of comparison. If Abel’s sacrifice was more excellent than Cain’s, then the inference is that Cain’s sacrifice was excellent.

Cain may have reasoned that he should offer a sacrifice from the fruit of his hands, or of the harvest he had made. To human reasoning, that sounds good. However, there is one small consideration. God told him to do something different. How do I know this? The scripture tells us. Paul wrote

in Romans 10:17 “So faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Then we see that it was by faith that Abel offered his sacrifice. Therefore, we can conclude that God had instructed both Cain and Abel as to what he expected in their sacrifices. The instruction may have come from Adam, as the Patriarch. It may have seemed a “little thing” to Cain, but we know what destruction it brought.

In Leviticus 10:1 we find another example of what some might term a “little thing”. The text reads: “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not.” Some of the commentators have indicated that the meaning was “that the incense was lighted at an unauthorized time....” Whether it referred to the coals of fire coming from the wrong place, or the fire being introduced in the wrong manner or time; could we not assume those men thought it was a small thing? Yet if you read the text you will discover that fire went out from God to burn them alive. What possible difference could it mean that the coals of fire were taken from the wrong place? Or what difference could it mean if the fire was applied at the wrong time? To us that might be little, but God evidently disagreed.

One more example of what we might consider a “little thing” actually occurred after a man’s work was successfully accomplished. In 1 Kings 13 we read of a prophet of God that was instructed to “cry out” against the idol that King Jeroboam had set before the people to worship. He placed his life in danger standing before the king and denouncing their pagan worship. God had told him to return home a different way than the way he came and not to eat or drink anything while in the land of King Jeroboam. Yet an old false

prophet lied to him and convinced him that God would allow him to go to his house and have something to eat. Because he believed the lie, and disobeyed God. God took his life.

Would it not be a “small thing” if he had something to eat on the way home? After all, he did all that God commanded him as far as his work was concerned. His work was over. He was on his way home. He didn’t intend to disobey God, but he believed a lie.

There are other Old Testament examples, but these should suffice to let us know that we need to be aware of “little things.” Examine a few of these modern ideas with me if you will. What difference does it make if we dress in comfortable, if sloppy, attire when we come to worship. After all, does not God concern Himself with our heart? Certainly God is concerned with our heart. That is the problem. Is our heart right with God if we come before Him without the respect He is due? What difference did it make when Moses approached the burning bush? Do you remember what God told him to do? In Exodus 3:5 God said, “...put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” What possible difference could shoes make?

Our dress indicates respect. I know this as a teacher of oral communication. Let me share a quotation from an article on successful images: “Consider the impact that one's mode of dress has in our society. How does the person dress who manages your money matters? How do you imagine a policeman, a doctor, a nurse or a minister to look? In our society, certain "looks" have specific meanings. This theory may not seem fair, but it is a reality. For example, a person with a dingy, sloppy appearance, messy

hair and rumpled clothes, no matter the reason, conveys the message, "I don't care." <http://www.successimages.com/articles/sw11.htm>

When we attend worship in a sloppy appearance we are communicating to those around us, and to God, that we really don't care.

We see that we are to "worship" the Father today. John 4:23-24 reads, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

What danger could there be in dimming the lights in the auditorium during worship. On the surface there would be nothing wrong. There are no scriptures that indicate how bright or dim our auditoriums should be during worship. But perhaps we need to investigate a little further. Why is something like this done? This was popular in some congregations back in the 1960's when false ideas about the Holy Spirit were in some congregations in the brotherhood. The dimming of the lights were representative to some of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Therein lies the danger. We need to be concerned as to why something is done. What is the intent? Is the intent based on scripture? It was a dangerous trend, and it led to religious error on the part of many that went in that direction.

As to the addition of mechanical instrumental music being added to our worship, we have addressed this before in this paper. I won't go back over the arguments previously presented. It is what one might call extra-Biblical. It is not authorized in the New Testament for worship. To use it in Christian music is to change what God has told us to do. That may seem a little thing to some; but as we have seen, it is extremely dangerous to change

what God has given us to do. The track record of biblical examples does not bode well for those that have gone in this direction.

All through Biblical history there have been those that have made unauthorized changes in God's plan for work and worship. Little things can be very dangerous. We may not see the end result until it is too late.

Feature Two: *an article by R. C. Oliver*

(The following article was written for the first issue of Light Magazine that my father edited. It was written some 60 years ago in January of 1955, but I believe it to be still relevant today.)

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Man is, in every way, constituted to be happy, and we wish for you a happy year throughout 1955 (*and now 2015*). God in His omniscient wisdom has designed that you should be happy; however, that not all men are happy is axiomatic.

This is perhaps true because men generally seek happiness where it is not to be found, If therefore you would be happy throughout this new year, seek happiness where it alone dwells—in the close chambers of the bosom!

Gold and silver may satisfy your “love for money,” but such can never satisfy the heart! Precious gems may adorn your body, but they can never adorn your soul! True happiness is not to be found in what we *have*, but in what we *are*! If therefore my life is such today as will leave something to be re-enjoyed in memory and after life, instead of regret, sorrow and disappointment, I can call today's experiences really happy experiences, and should such activities be extended throughout the year, it will indeed be a happy new year.

Real happiness must spring up within the mind, and that man who seeks happiness by changing anything but his own disposition, will destroy his life in fruitless efforts and multiply the griefs which he intends to remove, Therefore, “be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed *by the renewing of our minds*, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Romans 12:2.

Feature Three: Sandy’s Women’s Corner

THE REWARDS OF TEACHING

I am always amazed at the joys I receive from teaching Bible School. I am also amazed at the things that happen in my class and the things the children say.

In the last month, two of my students have been baptized. I wasn’t surprised that either decided to be baptized, but I have been very conscious of the changes in these two.

Both of these children are extremely bright, and both are consistent with reading their Bibles every day and memorizing their verses each week. There is nothing very amazing about either of those things. What does amaze me is that children can be so responsible. They can see needs in circumstances and in people and meet those needs without instructions, even without really thinking about it.

Last Sunday morning we had an unusually large class. We had most of our class there and three visitors. We had to move chairs and generally disrupt the normal order of things to accommodate our large class. The children were attentive, and the participation was great.

When class was over, I was busy saying goodbye to the children, and the other teacher was busy handing out memory verses for next week.

When all the children were gone, I turned to find the classroom restored to order. All the chairs had been returned to their proper places. The room was straightened, notebooks in their places, pencils in their containers. The boy recently baptized had taken charge of the situation. No one asked him to do it. He just took the responsibility and did it.

The other of my students that was baptized was a girl. She has been an excellent student, both in school and in her Bible classes. She is fun and has been the source of several articles I have written over the last few years.

What amazes me about her is that she is so interested in so many things. She loves horses, music, baton, art, and a host of other things. She can talk to little kids or old people! She has a great sense of humor, and she makes me laugh.

One of the reasons she gave for wanting to become a Christian was because of some conversations she had with some of classmates at school. They had seen a movie that portrays God or Jesus as Santa Claus. This disturbed her. She just couldn't get it out of her mind that people would believe such a thing. So, she set out to change their minds. Some of these students were actually saying they believe this nonsense.

When she realized that she could actually talk with her friends about her faith, she knew she was ready to be baptized.

I often sit in my classroom before class on Sunday morning or sometimes during the week, and I pray for them individually by name. I pray that they will become Christians. I pray they will understand the importance of worship, Bible study, learning memory verses, and praying. I thank God for every one of them because they give me hope in the future of the church.

Every Sunday and every Wednesday when I walk into that classroom, I see the faces of those that will someday be Bible teachers, elders, deacons,

preachers, Christian moms and dads. I realize the responsibility that puts on me and every other teacher of God's Word.

When those precious faces look at me, and I see the sincerity in them, that is the best reward I could every have. I have a new brother and sister in Christ, and I am so grateful to have had a tiny part in teaching these as well as the other eleven that sit in my class each week.

Feature Four: Our Communication:

If you have an important point to make, don't try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time - a tremendous whack.

Winston Churchill

http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic_communication.html#GIryhtxTtJsJKM3g.99

Feature Five: Bible Question

“In the Lord’s prayer why do we say ‘Lead us not into temptation?’ Surely never would He lead us into anything wrong.” –J.B.S.

God is said to do a thing that He only suffers or permits to be done. The idea therefore is this: Suffer us not to be tempted above that which we are able to bear. I know that God promises to do this, even as He promises bread to His people; nevertheless, in order to show our dependence on Him, we are told to pray for both bread and protection. (R C Oliver)

Humor:

A kindergarten teacher was observing her classroom of children while they drew. She would occasionally walk around to see each child's artwork.

As she got to one little girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was. The girl replied, "I'm drawing God." The teacher paused and said, "but no one knows what God looks like." Without missing a beat, or looking up from her drawing the girl replied, "They will in a minute."

In Closing:

Time passes so quickly. We are beginning our seventh year with this edition. I have enjoyed visiting with you by this medium. I trust that you will have a very happy new year this year. I mentioned in my last posting of this paper that past issues can now be found on Brother Brad Price's Web page. I will also be placing some of my dad's radio sermons on this page. If you would like to read any back issues, they are on his blog, which can be found at:

abiblecommentary.com/lightforourage

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