

Inconvenient!

Joe Slater

Suppose we changed our meeting time to 3 AM on Sundays. While we might not like it, many of us would be here despite the inconvenience. Now, relax! There are no plans to change the meeting time! It brings up the question, though: How willing are you to be inconvenienced in your service to God?

Antonius Felix, governor of Judea, didn't like what he was hearing as Paul was instructing him in the gospel. *"Go away for now,"* Felix said. *"When I have a convenient time, I will call for you"* (Acts 24:25). As far as the record goes, that convenient time never came. The governor wasn't much interested in becoming a Christian anyway; mostly he was hoping Paul would pay a bribe.

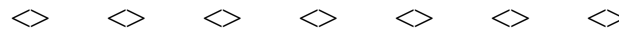
Unlike Felix, Christians are interested in hearing and doing the will of God. (Or we're supposed to be, anyway.) Are you willing to be inconvenienced for the Lord? Let's be specific: Are you willing to make a visit instead of watching your favorite TV program? Or does that visit have to wait until you have "spare time"? Would you reschedule a vacation if it conflicted with a Gospel Meeting? Would you attend services rather than getting an early start on that business trip? In short, are you willing to put God (not your convenience) first?

The early Christians certainly did not practice a religion of convenience! How convenient was it to be beaten or imprisoned for proclaiming the gospel? Was walking all over the country to tell people about Jesus convenient? And if we can believe the historical records, the early Christians often met around sunrise on the first day of the week since that was the only time that the slaves could attend. No doubt it would have been more

convenient for everyone, especially the slaves, just to stay home to get a little extra sleep.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus left the splendor of Heaven to come to this earth, taking upon Himself a body of human flesh. What if He had said, "No, it just isn't convenient for Me right now." Think of the times Jesus spent all day teaching and healing, only to spend all night in prayer. Not exactly convenient, wouldn't you say? And where would we be if, when His crucifixion was imminent, Jesus had backed out because it wasn't convenient?

There is nothing wrong with accommodating convenience where we can. But brethren, God has gone to a great deal of trouble for us! May it never be that we would insult Him by serving Him only when it is convenient.



40 Days and 40 Nights

Jesus once went forty days and forty nights without eating (Matthew 4:1-2). Perhaps we have never really considered the toll that this fasting must have taken on Him.

Someone noted the following: "A healthy thirty-year-old American male consumes about 4000 calories per day. But even if Jesus needed only 2500 calories per day to maintain his body weight, not eating for forty days meant losing forty pounds. If He started out weighing 160 pounds, His weight would have dropped to 120 pounds or less" (Anderson, Leith. Faith Matters. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Summerside Press).

The tempter came when Jesus was extremely weak. Yet Jesus withstood the temptation, as can we (Matthew 4:3-11).

Via Jacksonville, AL

Incremental Lostness

I listened the other day as a political "spin doctor" explained how those he had represented were planning to get their program across. He understood, he said, that the American people wouldn't accept it in one huge dose. But, he said, "We'll implement it incrementally."

What he meant was this: They won't approve our plan if we give them the whole thing up front, so we intend to give it to them a little at a time until we have the whole thing in place without their realizing what is going on.

Isn't that the way Satan works to destroy the faith of Christians? You see, very few will just leap wildly into apostasy, and Satan knows that. But he also knows that he can, sometimes, get us to accept sin in small doses, then in greater and greater doses, gradually, until we've finally gone all the way in departing from the living God.

A worship assembly skipped here, a little wrong thing done there. A seemingly innocuous, but spiritually detrimental attitude adopted here, an "insignificant" unbiblical belief accepted there, and the next thing you know, you're a lot farther from faithful discipleship than you ever thought, in your wildest dreams, you could go.

What's the difference, really, whether you surrender totally and immediately to the evil one, or take your trip down the broad way to the Bad Place one little step at a time? The end result is all the same, isn't it?

--Van Ledbetter (via Horse Cave, KY)