

Is It Relevant?

Joe Slater

An elder in a congregation far from here once remarked concerning Bible classes, “If it isn’t relevant, we don’t teach it.” If I were face-to-face with him, I would ask, “Please show me the passage of Holy Scripture that isn’t relevant.” We may more easily see the relevance of John 3:16 than of the genealogies in First Chronicles. But those dry, dusty genealogies demonstrate how God worked with a nation of flawed people to bring forth the Savior of the world who uttered the immortal words of John 3:16. Calling any part of God’s word “irrelevant” borders on blasphemy!

Much of modern society deems the Bible and God to be irrelevant. That’s hardly surprising, but may it never be that members of the body of Christ join that chorus! Rather, let us explain and demonstrate to the world why God and the Bible are profoundly relevant.

They are relevant because the Bible presents the truth about God! Yes, God does exist, militant atheism to the contrary notwithstanding. The Bible begins with God as Creator, and He remains so. God is not whatever you want Him to be; He has revealed Himself in His word (Bible) and His world (creation). That’s relevant!

The true God has revealed how He expects us to behave. Morality is not open to debate. Every society that has ignored God’s moral standards has crumbled. Ours is on the brink. Is that relevant?

Christ’s gospel is God’s power to save sinful people. Perverted gospels will not save. The world may not want to hear it; timid, lukewarm brethren may not want to talk about it. But it is relevant!

Christ built His church, having purchased it with His blood. It is His spiritual body, comprised of the saved. People may not recognize such relevance, but that simply means you and I have work to do!

Be Attuned To The Spirit’s Ways

One blogger criticizes following a program to be the church:

“Everyone loves to idealize the early church. Those were ‘the good old days.’ Entire movements of the church, known as Restoration Movements, have attempted to cast aside all of church history and tradition beyond what we have recorded in Scripture, in the interest of getting back to the ‘early church,’ when it was all working. If we can just do what they did, the rationale goes, we will see what they saw.”

What’s his solution?

“As we move forward in reading the story of The Movement, let’s take care not to read too prescriptively, in search of principles and such. Let us instead seek to attune ourselves to the person of the Holy Spirit and his nature, character, and ways of engaging with the human community. To be clear, the acts of the Apostles mattered. That’s just not what this story is about.”

Oh, **too** prescriptively. Can we read it a little prescriptively? But wait, isn’t he searching for principles and offering us merely another set of them when he starts ought, “Let us instead ...”? Indeed, he is! His problem is not with prescriptions, norms, or principles, but he wants us all to adopt his.

There’s the catch, isn’t it? How to be attuned to the Spirit and to his “ways of engaging with the human community”? Is it not through Scripture? Or are we to wait for some whisper in our ear from above? Or do we go pawing through church history (yours, ours, or theirs?) for those principles?

The Bible is exactly that: prescriptive. Otherwise, chunk it. Go with your hunches. Stick with your unholy-spirit induced beliefs. Find the Holy Spirit’s ways in animal entrails or emotional outbursts. Whatever tickles your fancy.

The writer throws out the baby with the bath water. The book of Acts is normative. It show us how it’s done and how it ought to be done. And why it’s done. And who makes it happen. We need the power and the prescription.

--J. Randal Matheny (via fellowshiproom.com)

TEACHING THE NEXT GENERATION

The psalmist wrote, “*Now also when i am old and gray-headed, O God, do not forsake me until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come*” (Psalm 71:18). We quickly note the concern that the inspired writer had for the generations that would follow him. He wanted to show God’s strength and power to “this generation” and “everyone who is to come.”

Our attitude should be the same. It was not so many years ago that I was young, and the older generation was there to teach me the strength, power, and ways of God. I will always be indebted to that “older generation” for doing so.

May we never forget that God’s truth must be taught and re-taught to each generation. The aged apostle Peter wrote to the young and old alike: “*I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me*” (2 Peter 1:12-14). In this passage, Peter strongly emphasized the need to remind people of divine truth, even though they may already know these things.

I belong to a generation that has witnessed a change in direction within the church. Beginning several decades ago, attitudes started to change. Less emphasis was given to what the Bible calls “first principles” (Hebrews 5:12). The Hebrews writer lamented that such first principles had to be taught over and over again to some in the church who should have been teachers themselves. This shows that we must teach more than just first principles, especially to those who know and honor such simple truths. But if first principles are not being followed and respected, it becomes necessary to teach and re-teach them.

We will always owe the next generation the knowledge of fundamental divine truths. Failure to teach them today will bring nothing but trouble tomorrow.

--Milton Smith (Tulsa, OK) via Old Paths

One preacher said: “I would like to find out what fruit Adam and Eve ate that made them realize they were naked, because I’d pass it around again!”