

Does It Make Any Difference? (3)

Joe Slater

When a difference arises, especially in matters of religion, it's convenient to avoid the issue by saying, "It doesn't make any difference." But what if it does?

As shown in last week's article, what we believe about Jesus makes a huge difference. Sincerely believing He never existed or is something less than the Son of God results in dying in your sins and missing Heaven!

What you believe a sinner must do to be saved also makes an enormous difference. You need not look far to see that even professing believers in Christ give starkly different answers to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Faith alone! Pray the "sinner's prayer"! Invite Jesus into your heart! But neither Jesus nor the apostles taught such things. As always, we look not to the traditions of men but to the word of God for His answer.

But wait! When the Philippian jailor asked what to do to be saved, Paul said "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Acts 16:30-31). However, when the Jews in Acts 2 asked what to do, Peter told them to "*repent and be baptized*" (vv. 37-38). So, why the different answers?

In short, the answer depends on where the person is along the way to salvation. The jailer was a pagan who knew next to nothing about Jesus. To tell him at that moment to be baptized would have been absurd (though after he learned, he was baptized "*the same hour of the night*," Acts 16:33). The Jews in Acts 2 learned from Peter that Jesus was the Christ, and that they had sinned by having him murdered. Telling them to believe would have been superfluous – they now believed, or they wouldn't have asked what to do! They needed to repent and be immersed for the remission of their sins.

What could matter more than your salvation? Will you trust the traditions of men or the word of God?

Dinner Table Conversation

In a recent *Smithsonian* column, Lonnie G. Bunch III tells of his home life. "Our dinner table was more than a place for shared meals" he writes. His parents expected the children to discuss "any topic from Socrates to Sojourner Truth."

What is dinner table conversation like in our homes? Where will such conversation lead our children?

Lonnie Bunch became one of the senior administrators of the Smithsonian in part because of the nature of his home life. His parent's conversations, in which he was included, caused him to take an interest in history. He sought a degree in history and became associated with the Smithsonian. Such a trajectory would have been unlikely if his home conversation had centered around sports or the latest Hollywood gossip.

Dinner table conversation on "any topic from Socrates to Sojourner Truth" is better than dinner table bickering, or pointless gossip; but there are topics that are better still.

Due to the nature of his home life, Timothy was familiar with the scriptures from childhood (2 Timothy 1:5 & 3:15). That set the trajectory for his life. Let us be careful that "*no corrupting talk*" comes from our mouths, but only that which is good for building others up (Ephesians 4:29).

Having that kind of conversation around our children does not guarantee lifelong faithfulness on their part. It is possible for good parents to have children that go astray (Ezekiel 18). But dinner table conversation, and other things that children learn at home, often set the trajectory for their lives.

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)

The Best Of Friends

The book of Proverbs is filled with wise sayings covering a gamut of topics. One topic that it covers quite well is that of friendship. Let's note four qualities of friendship from the book of Proverbs that will help us discover the best of friends.

First, the best of friends is one who is always in your corner. "*A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity*" (Prov. 17:17). That doesn't mean they will always agree with your actions and decisions, but they will never give up on you. They love you and desire the best outcome for you.

Second, the best of friends offers you strength and wisdom. Solomon instructs us, "*Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another*" (Prov. 27:17). If we are without good friends, we will soon discover how dull we truly are, and that we are in need of sharpening.

Third, the best of friends is one who tells the truth. He will be open, honest, and sincere. Solomon said, "*Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy*" (Prov. 27:6). We feel good when everyone agrees with us, but we need a true friend to be candid at all times.

Fourth, the best of friends is one who is thoughtful and considerate. We are told, "*Like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar on soda, Is he who sings songs to a troubled heart.*" This friend knows when and how to say or do things to help their friends.

Let's do our best to become a friend like this, and seek out friends that fit these qualities.

Travis Robertson (via Bulletin Gold)