

What's the Use?

Joe Slater

Most (if not all) faithful Christians have wondered at one time or another, "What's the use?" We strive to set a good example and speak the truth in love, yet visible results are few and far between.

Several centuries before Christ the prophet Isaiah may have felt the same way. Both Israel and Judah were a mess! The first thirty-nine chapters of his book thundered prophecies of doom! But the rest of Isaiah inspires hope for better days. Restoration is coming! In the more distant future Messiah is coming! Right living and sound teaching are not in vain. *"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it"* (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Did Isaiah have any visible results from his ministry? At least a few seem to have heeded his proclamation of God's word (Isaiah 8:18 refers to *"the children whom the Lord has given me"*). The vast majority, of course, rejected and sometimes vehemently opposed him.

Christ's gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). Will everyone who hears the gospel obey it and be saved? Certainly not, but some will! Nevertheless, His word will accomplish His purpose by providing people with the opportunity to trust and obey. Our duty is to plant and water; God will give the increase when the soil (the human heart) is right (see 1 Corinthians 3:6).

Majority Rule?

Many seem content to rely on the results of popular opinion polls. Admittedly, we get a certain feeling of comfort in knowing that most people agree with us on certain issues. But that is often a false and misguided comfort. Change agents freely cite such sources when doing so bolsters their case. But the results of such polls are often skewed because questions are asked in such a way as to solicit the desired response. We have been programmed to believe that the majority rules, even in matters of morality.

What does the Bible say about the subject? Jesus says, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me"* (John 14:6). Christ was very exclusive in His claims. Similarly, Peter says, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). **Christianity is clearly an exclusive religion.**

Near the end of His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, *"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it"* (Matthew 7:13-14). Before allowing the majority to set your path in life, remember that most people will be lost. Why? Because they are unwilling to subject themselves to the authority of Christ. Jesus says, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

We must follow God's word as our guide in religious faith and practice. While popular opinion polls may tell us what people think; the Bible tells us what God requires. Remember, we will stand before God and not men on the Day of Judgment.

--Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)

MAD WORLD INDEED

The 1963 film *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* tells the story of a large group of individuals seeking to find a fortune in cash (by 1963 standards) buried in a coastal town. The main characters display madness as they throw out all reasoning in their attempts to find the money. One man steals a tow truck, while another charts an antique biplane, hoping to be the first. The movie has an **Amazing Race** feel, but silliness prevails as the film exhibits a sense of total lunacy.

A spirit of lunacy prevailed in Jeremiah's world, but rather than being silly, can only be described as mad, mad, mad, mad. Warning the people of Judah's imminent destruction, Jeremiah declared that *"the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood"* (8:8), countering those who avowed that peace was at hand. At one point, Jeremiah's foes lowered him into the mud of a dry cistern (38:6), hoping to eliminate him. True to Jeremiah's word, the nation would be taken into Babylonian captivity.

Fast forwarding to the present, this writer will say without hesitation that similar conditions exist today. Just as in the time of Jeremiah, destruction awaits the world in which we live (2 Peter 3:10). Many throw out all reasoning, ignoring God's warnings while serving the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4). Naysayers seek to discredit Jesus' message, declaring His teachings to be hate-filled and out of touch. Sadly, those who choose this path will experience madness without end (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

--Kenny Westmoreland (Celina, TN)

Maturity: When you stop making excuses and start making changes.

--Jon Rowe (via Facebook)