

Beware of the “Me” Gospel

Most older church members have been well warned of the dangers associated with what used to be called the “Social Gospel.” The concept of which was to use “social” means and events to attract people to the church, and then teach them the gospel. Aside from the lack of biblical authority for such, there was another basic “fly in the ointment” of this tactic. Whatever is used to “attract” people will have to be supplied in increasing amounts to “keep” them. Thus, churches adopting this procedure soon found themselves awash with “food, fun, and socializing” to maintain their newfound members. Bible preaching, Bible teaching, and Bible practicing suffered. Eventually, the pendulum began to swing the other way as would-be church members saw through these shallow and materialistic devices and realized that “church” was supposed to be about the Bible. So-called “Bible Churches” sprang up everywhere as seekers sought to move away from denominations that were ripe these “social” abuses.

But after decades of children being brought up in the “me” generation, with self-esteem being emphasized to the nth degree, society was inundated with adults full of self-importance, self-absorption, and self-centeredness. How could the gospel message possibly be “adapted” to attract and keep such individuals? The answer: Make the gospel’s appeal all about “me” and “my” problems. Teach classes, preach lessons, have Gospel Meetings, and write books to show how the gospel “fixes” my marriage, my children, my in-laws, my job, my friends, my.... life. Is this really that different from the “Health and Wealth” preaching of television (charlatan) evangelists?

Of course, the real problem with this kind of “gospel” is it that misses the primary point: The *good news* of the gospel is Jesus Christ and His power to save *souls*. The true gospel isn’t about making your life *here* the idyllic panacea you desire; it is about making your *hereafter* life glorious rather than disastrously destructive through your belief in and obedience to Jesus Christ! In the mean time, the gospel may:

- Destroy your marriage, 1Corinthians 7:10-11;
- Ruin your relationship with your parents, children, and in-laws, Matthew 10:34-37;
- Cost you your job, Acts 19:17-19,23-27;
- Make you lose your friends, 2Corinthians 6:14-18; and,
- Require even your very life, Luke 14:25-27; Matthew 10:38-39.

“Well, that’s not very attractive!” No, it isn’t, IF you are more interested in Jesus and His gospel serving you rather than you serving Him. Read carefully Matthew 6:19-34, and understand that our primary objective in life must be to “*seek first His kingdom*” rather than our own, and “*His righteousness*” rather than our own. Anything less than this is *laying up “for yourselves upon earth”* rather than “*in heaven.*”

Will being a faithful Christian make you a better *spouse*? Of course, if you understand and practice “marriage” as God ordained, Ephesians 5:22-33. Will being a faithful Christian make you a better *parent/child*? Of course, if you are the kind of parent/child the Bible requires, Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20-21. Will being a faithful Christian make you a better employee/employer? Of course, if you are willing to be the kind which the Bible requires, Colossians 3:22-25. Will being a faithful Christian make you a better friend to others? Of course, if you are willing to be the kind of friend you should be, Romans 12:9-21. Will be a faithful Christian give you the life you always wanted? Of course, if you wanted a life that would allow you to: “*regard one another as more important than himself,*” Philippians 2:3; *serve rather than being served,* John 13:12-17; and *love and do good to those who don’t love but do persecute you,* Matthew 5:43-48.

The bottom line is this: The gospel is not about making your physical life here on earth better; it is about making your *soul* fit for an eternal abode with God in heaven. If our desires for it, or our appeals with it aren’t that, we’re missing not only its point, but also its benefit. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)