

Because It Is Right

Reward incentive motivation permeates our society. People respond to rewards just like little puppies do. Some parents think only in terms of rewarding their children, and they even reward them for being bad. When a parent says to a little child, "If you will quit throwing a temper tantrum, we will go get an ice cream as soon we get away from the Dr.'s office," he is rewarding bad behavior and the child quickly understands how to get what he wants. The "in thing" now in many churches is to offer physical rewards for being religious. That ranges from the "gospel of health and wealth" that says, "If you give \$100, God will give you \$1,000," to appealing to the fleshly appetites of entertainment to get people to come to "church."

Whatever happened to doing right because it is right? Surely, Jesus offers men rewards but those incentives have nothing to do with the sensual de-

By Jim R. Everett

sires. In fact, he condemned those who followed him because they were fed -- "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life," (John 6:29). The reward for righteousness is eternal life with God. God expects right behavior, because he is holy and we must be like him to share in spiritual life (1 Peter 1:15-16).

Christians are committed to a way of life that is righteous, because it is the right way to live. Sometimes the righteous life may offer a material advantage but that isn't why the Christian lives that way. At other times, being righteous may be a difficult road and the righteous may be mocked and persecuted. The disciple of the Lord does right when people speak well of him and when they do not -- his motivation is doing right, because it is the right thing to do!



Classes this Week

Kid's Class at the Building at 5:15 All Are Invited	Monday Night Ladies' Class at 7 PM at the building	Thursday Night Acts Study at 7:00 PM at Jillian Petty's
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Sick

Jim and Barbara Kicker	Pam Dial (Laura Weldon's Mother)
Albert Boyles (William Herd's Relative)	Rose Tate (Toni Herd's Cousin)
Adriana Mininno (Haley Chittam's Cousin)	Dave and Betty Bradford
Blake Whatley (Hunt's neighbor)	Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's)
Marty and Aubrey Meeks (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Carrie Chavers (Friend of Sharon Bailey)
Carol Dickerson	Chick Wade
Rachel Bragwell	Cheryl Wilson

News and Notes

- Let's remember our expectant mothers: Anna Miller and Laura Humphrey.
- Our College class and singing with be at the Johnson's tonight. Seth Buchanan will be teaching.
- Please sign up to host or teach the Monthly Home Kid's class (Grades 1-8). College students are encouraged to be study leaders.
- We will have a singing tonight!
- Please sign up for the communion preparation and locking/unlocking building lists.
- Our monthly men's business meeting will be this afternoon
- Audio CDs of Today's Sermon will be immediately available.

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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

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Changes I Have Seen Since I Began Preaching

By Forrest D. Moyer



Thought to Ponder

If The gospel is too readily heard and taken for granted, as though it contained no unsettling news and no unwelcome threat ... Then It is a truth that has been flattened, trivialized, and rendered inane.

I began preaching in 1946. Some forty-seven years have gone by since I began. I have seen many changes both in the world and in the church. Means of travel and communications have drastically changed. People have even gone to the moon. Governments have toppled; new nations have begun. Standards of living have improved for millions. And yet poverty reigns in many nations. Crime has become the norm in most of our cities. A car is stolen every 42 minutes in Fresno. People are killed as they stand on the street corners; drug and alcohol use have become common even among teenagers. Violence, nudity and profanity are standard fare on television and in movies. Homosexuality was one of the most disgraceful acts that one could think of when I was young. Now it is being heralded as being a normal lifestyle. Abortion was almost unheard of when I was a boy. Now millions of abortions are performed every year. We have an administration that endorses

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both homosexuality and abortion. Things have changed!

Changes in the Church

Not only have there been changes in the world, but we have seen many changes in the church of our Lord as well. Changes in such things as expedients might be most effective. Changes in God's ordained worship, government, and work are always wrong. I have seen changes in both areas. With the coming of more efficient communications, we have been able to

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Do You Have a Bible Question?
Call (334) 734-2133 or E-mail: LarryRouse@aubeacon.com



SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class 9:30 AM
Worship 10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Classes 7:00 PM

Ask about our home Bible Study Groups!

Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

Check Us Out On the Internet: www.aubeacon.com

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effectively teach more people. We have been able to sound forth the truth in radio and television as well as the printed page. I am happy to have been enabled to use such methods in gospel preaching.

I remember when I was young that tobacco use was quite common among members of the church. In fact, between Bible class and the assembly for worship, it was common to see dozens of men standing in the yard or on the steps smoking. We thought that anyone who said anything about such habits was a "fanatic" or "radical." Today most brethren have seen the danger in tobacco use. Here ... we see no one standing outside smoking.

When I was young, in every gospel meeting you would hear sermons on why we don't use instrumental music or have choirs or groups singing in our worship. Today many churches are introducing choirs and groups. Some are even using instrumental music. Things have changed!

I have seen other changes that frighten me very much. When I began preaching, the Bible was accepted by all brethren to be the inspired word of God. Brethren everywhere demanded "book, chapter and verse" preaching. All preachers appealed to "command, example and necessary inference" as the way to establish Bible authority. The result was a united brotherhood. Today, it is different. Some brethren no longer regard the Bible as the truly inspired word of God. Even more have given up the demand for "book, chapter and verse" preaching and are calling for a "new hermeneutic" that rejects "command, example and necessary inference" as the way of determining God's will for our lives. Max Lucado, a well known author and minister of the Oak Hills church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas, says: "I have a gut

feeling that we (the church of Christ) have approached the Bible as engineers, looking for a certain design or architectural code. And I think we find that everyone finds a different code ... There is no secret code. The Bible is a love letter as opposed to a blueprint. You don't read a love letter the same way you read a blueprint" (quoted in Behold the Pattern, Goebel Music, p. 114). When brethren regard the Bible as a "love letter," they cease to "follow the pattern of sound words" (**2 Tim. 1:13**). Truly, things have changed.

When I began preaching, I never heard of such things as so-called "fellowship halls," "church kitchens," or "family centers with gymnasiums" among our brethren. When such things were first introduced, there was a hue and cry across the nation against such. Now such are commonplace among many brethren. Yes, things have changed.

If in our study of the word of God, we find that we are failing to do what God says or are doing what He does not say, then we need to change. But let us make sure that our changes are what God requires and not what we decide that would be pleasing to us.

Paul said to Timothy, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (**2 Tim. 1:13**). Jesus Himself said that "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word will never pass away." His message is an unchangeable message in the midst of a changing world. While we are involved in the changes of the modern world, it is gratifying to know that we can hold on to an unchanging God and to an unchanging message. Let us determine that we will never turn from the doctrine of Christ to any other message (**2 John 9-10; Gal. 1:8-9**). When the winds of change are blowing, we can latch on to the Rock of Ages and know that we are secure under the shelter of His wings.



The Power of Simplicity

By Bill Hall

Jesus Christ had a deep appreciation for .simple things. His teaching was profound, but always simple. He reached the hearts of His hearers, not with high-sounding philosophical jargon, but with illustrations and "to the point" teaching. He could see in a farmer sowing his seed, or a lily showing forth its beauty, or a shepherd leaving his flock to seek one lost sheep, or a loving father welcoming a wayward son, a lesson that could teach some spiritual truth.

His apostles were chosen from the humble class. He could appreciate people, not for what they possessed, but for what they were; and, in some cases, not for what they were, but for what they could become. He recognized true quality, and true quality is often found in the simple and humble.

The worship He ordained was simple in nature. "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul... spoke to them ..." (**Acts 20:7**). Even the poorest could worship, for all that was required of a material nature was a little bread and fruit of the vine. Those of little talent could worship, for God was listening in view of the heart rather than the beauty of the voice.

He authorized a simple organization for His church, with each congregation appointing its own bishops and deacons (**Philippians 1:1**). There were no denominational associations, conferences, or synods. There were no inter-church organizations or societies. Yet, through

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the simple organization given the church by the Lord, the world of the first century was thoroughly evangelized and the needy among them provided for. The Lord knew that success in His work would not be brought about through complexity of organization, but through dedication, faith, and commitment on the part of His followers. We make a terrible mistake when we try to substitute the former for the latter.

Why this simplicity? "That no flesh should glory in His presence" (**1 Corinthians 1:29**). The complex systems which men devise tend to bring glory to themselves rather than to God.

To return to the simplicity which our Lord ordained might not be impressive to the worldly-minded, but, then, Jesus Himself is not very impressive to the worldly-minded. Besides, our purpose is not to impress the worldly-minded, but to please God and bow in submission to His will. Let us do away with our super projects and complex systems. Let us learn to appreciate simple teaching and simple ways. Above all, let us learn to appreciate Bible teaching and Bible ways.

We like the following quote from Ed Harrell: "How foolish we are to think that God will be impressed with our voices when we sing; after all, He hears the angels sing! How foolish to think He will be impressed with our cathedrals; remember, He made the Grand Canyon!" What He is seeking for is a heart that is pure, loving, and obedient to His will. And that's simple.

