

The Spartan Sower

The sower soweth the word... Mark 4:14



June 10, 2007 (Vol. 7)

Are We Issue Oriented?

Edited

Some take pride in saying, "*We are not an issue oriented church.*" This kind of statement is usually made to show how one congregation apparently remains at peace while others seem to continually be absorbed and focused on "issues".

There were many "issues" in which Jesus, His apostles and New Testament churches were involved. We may even say they were "continually" involved in such issues. For example, divorce and marrying another, circumcision, our relationship to civil government, and denying a bodily resurrection are just a few questions we see being discussed in Scripture (*Matthew 19:1-9, I Corinthians 7, Acts 15, Matthew 22:17-22, Romans 13:1-7, I Corinthians 15*). Should we cast disparagement upon Jesus, belittle His apostles, and demean the New Testament churches by calling them "issue oriented"?

Observe Paul as he strengthens the church in Colossae by teaching the Truth that God removed the law of Moses, "*the bond written in ordinances*" having "*taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross*" (*Colossians 2:15*). Then Paul writes in the very next verse, "*Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath day.*" (*2:16*). Paul concludes that the truth of God nailing the Old Law to the cross applies in five ways, which could be called "issues". No one was to "judge" them regarding specific ordinances in the Law of Moses because this law has been brought to an end in Christ's death on the cross. Did Paul sin or create problems by teaching the truth on these "issues"? Was Paul creating an "issue oriented" church in Colossae by bringing to their attention some problems regarding improper judging? No. He was simply applying the New Testament to their lives.

Not only did Paul teach about "issues", but there were occasions when issues were already brewing in the minds of Christians and they wrote Paul asking him questions. For example, issues connected with marriage and divorce needed attention in Corinth. Paul responds to "*the things whereof ye wrote*" (*I Corinthians 7:1-40*). Did he condemn the church in

Corinth for being absorbed in issues? Do he brag about congregations that were better than Corinth for having avoided "issues"? No, he answered their issues with Divine instruction. As Paul said to the Ephesians elders, "*For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*" (Acts 20:27)

"Issues" are where the rubber meets the road, spiritually speaking. Truth must be taught and applied to our lives. Also, those who brag about having peace while **avoiding** "issues" will be in for a surprise down the road. We can either weed our garden day by day - which takes regular attention and work; or we can just let it go until the weeds choke out our fruitfulness. "Issues" will arise from time to time, whether it be doctrinal or moral error, doubts and misconceptions, etc. But God's word says that such times must come, and they are a test of our faithfulness to Him: "*For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.*" (1 Cor. 11:19)

When such concerns arise, we must prove our faithfulness to God by handling them properly. Being "issue oriented" is not wrong, it is essential. If we never face our "issues" as individuals or as local churches - then we will never be spiritually mature. In fact, without the proper use and application of God's word to "issues", we will begin to drift and digress. Truth is the bedrock of our salvation and unity (John 17:17; John 8:31-32).

In light of the above accounts, Jesus and Paul would not share the pride of one who brags that their church is not an "issue oriented" church, but would probably wonder why the spiritual diet of some is lacking the distinctive application of Scripture.

How Serious Is Our Confession To Jesus?

Edited

It has been a week now since the release of Steve Centanni, an American Fox News reporter, and Olaf Wiig, a New Zealand cameraman after they were held hostage for 13 days in Gaza by the Holy Jihad Brigades.

Before their release, Centanni and Wiig were made to spill out Anti-American statements, and at gun point convert to Islam. The propaganda and conversion was aired throughout the Muslim world via Al-Jazeera television. Centanni claimed on tape, "*I have embraced Islam and say the word Allah.*" He confessed "*the prophet Mohammad*" as his "*leader.*" Many Americans believe Centanni did the right thing, because they work from the principle that saving one's life in order to be available for dependant family members is essential. Some humanists reacted by saying they would say anything to save their lives at that moment and "live to fight another day."

Christians internalizing Centanni's ordeal, hope they would be willing to die for the Lord Jesus Christ in such a situation before they would seemingly convert to Allah, Mohammad and Islam. But they are slow to condemn Centanni because they know the pressure that such a situation has upon one's best intentions. In their memory bank lies Peter determined to die with the Lord, but when the proof of his convictions were tested, he succumbed to denying the Lord (*Matt. 26:35, 69-75*).

Some see Peter manifesting a weak faith, and know others in the Bible manifested the strong faith of martyrdom and conclude the Lord accepts us if we have faith, regardless if it is weak or strong. The Calvinist influence upon the Denominational world, deemphasizing works, comes to the forefront when many reason that the matter with Centanni has nothing to do with his salvation. Is this true from the revealed perspective of Jesus? Can "weak faith" save us even as a confess Mohammad to save our physical lives?

The public confession which Peter made when he confessed Jesus to be "*the Christ, the Son of the living God*" is the foundation stone upon which Jesus promised to build His church (*Matt. 16:16-18*). The moment we express our belief and conviction before men is very important to Jesus. But Peter was not at gunpoint. Does God give us a pass in life or death situations?

Early Christians were threatened with their life if they did not compromise with the Devil and confess Caesar as Lord. The Holy Spirit records this about them: "*They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death*" (*Revelation 12:11*). The Lord does not promise us the crown of Life if we are *faithful* up to the point of escaping death, but "*even unto death*" (*Revelation 2:10*).

It is all for Jesus in the presence of others or nothing from Jesus. He says, "*he that is not with me is against me...*" (*Luke 11:23*). Jesus has promised to

confess us "*before the Father*" if, and only if, we "*confess him before men*" (*Matthew 10:32*).

The Muslims may have only wanted propaganda showing the West's lack of conviction to die for their faith. Jesus demands we confess Him before men even if it means *losing our "life for His sake"*, for He says we will then "*find it*" (*Matt. 16:25*)! Look beyond men's rhetoric and hear what the Lord demands from us all.

PEOPLE TO REMEMBER & PRAY FOR

Joyce Gardner (eyes), **Johanna Fletcher**, **Othena Kinnard**, **Jo Miller**, **Wesley Geer** (At home), **Mag Bumbalough** (Life Care 519), **Thelma Cunningham**, **Mary Cox**, **Monie Petty** (breathing difficulties), **Dave Poteet** (NHC 212), **Dorris Williams**, **Robert & Betty England**, **Ed Williams** (heart blockages), **Joe Smith**, **Mike Tenpenny**, **Thelma Klein**, **DeLeesa Price** (expecting) and **Alisa Fletcher** (expecting). **Kenley Streeval**, **Lydia Poe**, **Larry Bumbalough**, **Jake Hale**, **Joshua & Misty Poteet**, **Carolyn Williams**.

Herbie Sims (Ralph's brother).

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Home Bible Study** - Sat. June 23
- **Door To Door** - Every Tuesday @ 6pm.
- **Business Meeting** - Sun. June 24
- **Ladies Class** - 2nd & Last Sunday Each Month.
- **GM** - Raymond Castillo, Oct.14-19, 2007.
- **GM** - Brian Yeager, April 13-18, 2008.
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

We Invite You To All Our Services!

Sunday Bible Study	9 am
Sunday Worship	10 am
Sunday Evening Worship	6 pm
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7 pm

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