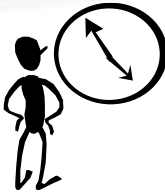


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:	
Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
(Or every other week)	
Bible Study	4:00 p.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday:	
Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

The Dispensable Man

By Matthew W. Bassford

There is no surer sign of being a control freak than wanting to control things postmortem. I qualify. Though some of my anxiety is directed at the prospect of dying slow and ugly, most of it is aimed at what will happen after I'm gone.

What will happen to my family? What will happen to my congregation and all the other people I love? What will happen to the song worship of the church? In short, surely without indispensable me, all of the above will fall apart!

There's a sense in which the above concerns are godly. We are supposed to love people and care about their welfare. We are supposed to be devoted to the things of God.

However, there's also a sense in which they are not. They reveal that on some level, I have made the Lord's work about me instead of Him. He's indispensable. I'm not.

Mordecai's warning to Esther in [Esther 4:13-14](#) beautifully illustrates this principle. He informs her that if her courage fails and she refuses to approach the king on behalf of the Jews, deliverance will arise from someplace else, but she and her family will perish. God's people were going to be saved no matter what. The only question was whether Esther would be involved in their salvation.

This seems counter-intuitive to us. Who could be as well placed to rescue the Jews from a Persian noble as the queen of Persia? However, even if Esther may have been Plan A, God's Plans B, C, D, and so on would have been equally effective in accomplishing His will. Haman was not going to frustrate His eternal purpose, even if He had to squash him with an anvil from heaven!

I am not essential to any of God's purposes either, especially if He allows my early exit. There are works that He has given me to do, and I have striven to perform them faithfully. However, the work will go on without me, and His de-

sires will be accomplished 20 years from now as they were 2500 years ago.

This realization is important for two reasons, one negative, one positive. The first is that self-centered anxiety opens the door for fear. If I try to control the future from the present, Satan will use my fear to corrupt and taint everything I do. When we live by fear instead of faith and love, the usual result is that we bring about the thing we're afraid of.

The second is even more important. God remains in control, so the good I want to do will be done without me. I won't be able anymore to lead my children to God, but others will be. I won't be preaching any more sermons for Jackson Heights, but other men of God will take the pulpit and carry forward the work. I won't write any more hymns, but other brothers and sisters will give the church what it needs to worship. I find this thought deeply reassuring!

Ultimately, my decisions are the same as Esther's. They aren't about others. They're about me. They will answer the lonely question of whether I will live with faith and courage or fall to fear and failure. If the former, I need only set my hand to the work before me as long as I am able. God will take care of the rest.

Teaching the Next Generation

By Andy Sochor

It has been said before that the church is just one generation away from apostasy. This is certainly true. While there are exceptions to any rule, generally what the wise man said is accurate: "*Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it*" (Proverbs 22:6). If we want children to follow the way of truth when they grow up, they must be taught the way of truth while they are growing up.

As we raise the next generation, we should focus on this question: Why do we believe, teach, and practice what we do? This is important. We are to "*please [God] in all respects*" (Colossians 1:10). The next generation must be taught to please God as well. But if we do not teach them how to do this, what will they do when they are grown?

To answer that question, consider what happened with the generation that rose up after Joshua and the sons of Israel conquered the land of Canaan:

"All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals, and they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the Lord to anger" (Judges 2:10-12).

Notice what the new generation of Israelites did – they did evil, forsook the Lord, served the false gods of the people around them, and provoked the Lord to anger. Why would they do this? They “*did not know the Lord*” (Judges 2:10). Regardless of whether this was due to a failure of the previous generation to teach or a failure of the new generation to listen, this still provides us with an important reminder of how vital it is for knowledge of the truth to be passed down from one generation to another. When it is not passed down, apostasy is inevitable.

So let us again consider the question stated earlier: Why do we believe, teach, and practice what we do? It is not sufficient to simply pass down what we believe, teach, and practice (though this is also important). We must impress upon the next generation the reasons why we believe, teach, and practice what we do. It is important that we teach the next generation the right reasons so as to promote continued faithfulness. If we teach the wrong reasons (either explicitly or implicitly), the danger of apostasy will be even greater.

The Wrong Reasons

First, let us consider some wrong reasons for doing what we do in service to God:

It is a tradition

Often people will hold to religious practices and doctrines because they grew up with them. But we should not do anything simply because we have always done it that way. Some traditions, the ones given to us in the word of God (II Thessalonians 2:15), must be kept – not because of mere tradition, but because they are right. Some traditions are contrary to the word of God and must be rejected (Matthew 15:3-6). Other traditions are harmless – neither commanded nor condemned – but must never be bound upon others (Matthew 15:1-2). Our standard must be truth, not tradition.

It is our preference

Many people will simply follow their conscience, believing that there are many paths that lead to heaven. But the wise man warned: “*There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death*” (Proverbs 14:12). Jesus is the only way to heaven (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). He promises to save those who “*obey Him*” (Hebrews 5:9). Our prayer should be that God’s will be done (Matthew 6:10) rather than selfishly seeking our own desires. Our standard must be God’s preference, not ours.

Others are doing it

One of the reasons why Israel rejected God and asked for a king was so that they could “be like all the nations” (1 Samuel 8:20). This desire to be like the world has plagued God’s people throughout history. Yet we are to be different. Paul wrote, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2). Our standard must be the word, not the world.

Other churches of Christ are doing it

The church belongs to Christ (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-24). When Paul referred to the local churches with which he was associated, he called them “churches of Christ” (Romans 16:16). However, we should not think that just because a congregation wears the name “church of Christ” that they are sound and should be emulated. This is a denominational concept. Wearing a name alone does not save. The church in Sardis had “*a name that [they were] alive, but [they were] dead*” (Revelation 3:1). Many “churches of Christ” teach and practice things that are foreign to the New Testament. Our standard must be the head of the church, not fallible humans in the church.

The Right Reasons

In contrast, let us notice the right reasons for doing what we do:

It is commanded

Jesus possesses “*all authority*” (Matthew 28:18). Therefore, we must “*observe all that [He] commanded*” (Matthew 28:20). This does not just include the words He spoke while on earth that are recorded in the first four books of the New Testament. It includes all that is commanded to us in the New Testament. Paul said, “*The things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment*” (I Corinthians 14:37; cf. I Thessalonians 4:2; II Peter 3:2).

It is authorized

Paul said, “*Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*” (Colossians 3:17). To do something “*in the name of the Lord*” is to do it by His authority. It is not enough for us to do whatever we choose and then claim that it is for the Lord. Jesus said, “*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 will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’*” (Matthew 7:21-23). It is not enough to simply believe in Jesus and be religious. We must respect Him enough to do what He has authorized us to do.

It is expedient

When we think about expedients, we must understand that something must first be authorized before it can be claimed to be expedient. Paul said, “*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient*” (I Corinthians 10:23, KJV). Once we understand what has been commanded of us and what is authorized, we can then look to determine the most helpful/profitable way of doing what is commanded and authorized. We should not allow tradition to hinder us from engaging in better ways of doing things. On the other hand, we must be careful that those “better” ways that we call “expedients”

do not go beyond what has been authorized in God's word.

All of the points above can be summarized in this statement: We must follow the word of God in all that we do. *"To the law and to the testimony!"* ([Isaiah 8:20](#)). The Scriptures are our standard and we must diligently follow what they teach.

Naturally, we want the next generation to be faithful to the Lord. John wrote, *"I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth"* ([III John 4](#)). Let us be sure we are teaching the next generation – not only what we believe, teach, and practice, but also why we believe, teach, and practice these things – so that they might also walk in the truth.

Quran and Book of Mormon

By Terry Wane Benton

These books or the people peddling them as books of God are way too late to be considered as equal to the Bible as inspired books of God.

Jesus told His apostles that they would be guided by the Spirit into **all** truth ([John 16:13](#)). All truth from God was therefore completely given through the apostles of Jesus in the first century. If the apostles didn't preach it and deliver it, it is not God's truth. Paul wrote that "if we or an angel from heaven preaches **any other** gospel than **what we** have preached, **let him be accursed**" ([Galatians 1:6-10](#)). The Quran (A.D. 630) is something the apostles did not preach. Therefore, those who preach the Quran are under the curse of God. The Book of Mormon (A.D. 1830) is not what the apostles preached. Therefore, those who support the Book of Mormon are likewise under the curse of God.

The scriptures of the Bible *"completely furnish the man of God"* ([II Timothy 3:16-17](#)). God's complete truth is in the 66 books of the Bible. All the truth God wants us to follow is in the Bible alone. The Old Testament section was for the Jews to prepare for the coming Messiah who turned out to be Jesus the Christ. The New Testament is the testimony and covenant of Jesus Christ. We are "complete" in Him ([Colossians 2:10](#)) which means that all our spiritual needs are completely met in Christ. Therefore, we do not need the Quran or the Book of Mormon. These are forgeries and fakes.

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no other way to a right relationship with God. Other paths will take you away from the true and living God ([John 14:6](#)). Be sure you are not being misled about such matters.

