

Staying Relevant – Part 2

Last week we talked about trying to create our own way to reach God. We talked about doctrines and rules that may be well-intentioned, but usually quickly turned into ways to control people. We're continuing the discussion this week with part 2 of Staying Relevant.

Introduction

Today we want to continue to discuss staying relevant and talk about two practical ways that we can keep our message from being meaningless and staying relevant.

There are two common sayings today that will keep you from being relevant to anyone. The first saying is "Do as I say, not as I do?" and the second is "That is the way we have always done it." Have you ever heard these before? Some people may not have actually said those words, but they did communicate them in other ways. Let's look at these and apply scripture to them so we can stay relevant today.

Do As I Say, Not As I Do

A frequent response to "Do what I say, not as I do" is "Practice what you preach." Every one of us falls into this from time to time. I have two sons and both are very much their father's son. I can see them making some of the same choices and subsequent mistakes I made. It also means they see things similarly to how I see them. There is no room for me to say one thing and do something else. Yet, from time to time, it happens.

It happens to all of us. Sometimes it is because we don't have time or it may be because it may inconvenience us too much. In either case, I can tell you, either of my sons will see it for what it is, and call me on it. How we respond to our actions being pointed out really separates a person of integrity from others.

If we respond with integrity, we can keep our overall message from being meaningless and stay relevant. However, the more we say one thing and do another the more our overall message is rendered meaningless. Each time we cross that line, our message is made even more meaningless until it has no meaning whatsoever.

This is especially true in a work or school environment where you are surrounded by people who do not know or follow Jesus. If we say one thing but do something else, our entire testimony is rendered null and void. If we talk about the joy of the Lord in our hearts and the peace that surpasses all understanding, and yet lose our temper at the drop of a hat, our message becomes meaningless.

If we talk about our utter reliance on God, but when times get tough we start making excuses and cutting corners instead of truly relying on God, our faith is rendered suspect.

How do we stay relevant in the world today? By prayer and spending time in the Bible. Look at Psalm 15. It is what we all should be striving for. Let's read it.

Psalms 15:1-5

(1) A psalm of David. LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? (2) The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the



truth from their heart; (3) whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, and casts no slur on others; (4) who despises a vile person but honors those who fear the LORD; who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind; (5) who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken.

Don't say one thing and do another. Try to live a blameless life and speak truth from your heart. Truth wrapped in compassion and understanding spoken with wisdom. That is doing what is right even when no one is around. It means not gossiping and spreading rumors, and most of all it is fearing God, that is having the deepest respect and adoration for Him.

That's The Way We Have Always Done It

The second that will keep us from being relevant in the world today is doing things because that's the way we've always done them.

There was an experiment done once with some chimpanzees. 5 chimps were placed in an enclosure with a ladder and on top of the ladder was a bunch of bananas. Each time a chimp would start to climb the ladder to get to the bananas, alarms would sound and they would all be hosed down with water. It got to the point that if any chimp started to climb the ladder, the others would start attacking him so they wouldn't get doused with water.

Later the researchers started replacing the chimps one at a time. A new chimp would come in and start climbing the ladder. The others would attack him to keep him from climbing the ladder. Slowly all the chimps were replaced with others. Until there were none of the original chimps in the enclosure. The researchers even removed the bananas from the top of the ladder. When a new chimp then came in and started to climb the ladder they all would gang up on him and prevent him from climbing it. Even though there were no bananas up there and none of them had heard the alarms or been doused with cold water.

They were doing it because they had always done it. A chimp starts to climb the ladder and the others would attack him. They didn't know why, but they had always done it.

So many of our church doctrines are similar. We often don't even know where the tradition comes from, yet we do it religiously. Let's not confuse this with the ordinances of the church; communion, water baptism, and marriage. The practice and implementation of each of these is well documented in scripture.

But the standard Sunday morning worship service order of "1 upbeat praise song, prayer, 2 more upbeat praise songs, announcements and offering, 3 slower worship songs, sermon, and finally the altar call" is merely a function of familiarity and time. There is nothing that says this is how a service is supposed to go.

There are reasons why that is a typical service order and there are reasons why most Christian churches meet on Sunday, but there is no scriptural basis for it, just tradition, and if you want to change it, you can.



Each time we answer a question with, “Because that’s the way we have always done it.” we become less relevant. There’s nothing wrong with tradition or habit, but own the fact that that is the reason why we do things a certain way and don’t be afraid to try something else sometimes.

That is what got the Pharisees in trouble with Jesus time and again. He was bringing the Kingdom of God to the people and upsetting their traditions and habits. Do not be a modern-day Pharisee. Know why you do things and be open to modifying traditions and habits if it helps get the gospel of Jesus Christ out to more people.

Friends, there are so many ways we can lose relevance and make our message meaningless. The more we do that, the easier it is for Satan to deceive people. Let’s read John 3:17.

John 3:17

(17) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Conclusion

Jesus’ gospel is simple. So simple that a child can understand it. Let’s keep making the good news of Jesus Christ relevant in the world today and start practicing what we preach and living a life that is blameless; a life that is pleasing to God and therefore a great witness of his love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

