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Keeping The Main Thing The Main Thing

Dear Friend,

Recently, while listening to a very well-known minister speak, he made the following statement: “The minister’s job is to keep the main thing the main thing.” I believe this holds true for preachers and believers alike. Why is it that so much time is spent hashing over questions that seem to divide the body rather than unite the body of Christ?

Think about what he is saying and consider how many times you have been in a conversation about spiritual issues. The next thing you know the other person had taken you down a rabbit trail regarding some insignificant issue. Now your pleasant conversation has become a debate. Once you’re finally able to walk away from the situation you scratch your head and wonder how did that happen?

If you’re not careful, a conversation like that could end up driving a wedge right between you and that person to the point that your relationship with them is never the same. It’s not hard to figure out who the source is of such division; the enemy. You might say; “But we were talking about the Bible.” Believe me, you weren’t the first ones to get into a debate over the Bible.

Debates and even all out fights have been erupting over the word of God for centuries. If you want proof of that just get in your car and drive around your town and ask yourself; “Where did all these denominations come from? Furthermore, which one is right”? That begs the question; “Is anyone of them completely right?” The answer to that question is, no.

According to what Paul wrote the Corinthians, we are all looking through a glass darkly. (1 Corinthians 13:12) In other words, what we see from God’s word is only as accurate as the degree to which the Holy Ghost has been able to reveal truth to us. For us to assume that any one person or group has all their doctrine perfectly aligned with God’s word is not correct. I would rather approach a situation understanding that none of us have everything perfectly understood regarding God’s word and we need to be open to hear each other.

“Well, I can’t listen to that person because they are not spirit filled.” Now, doesn’t that sound just like something straight from the heart of God? Absolutely not! The idea that this group over here has something more from God than that group over there simply because they have chosen to walk in more of what God has made available to everyone is ludicrous. God is manifesting Himself as much as He possibly can based on how much we are allowing Him. The fact that one person chooses not to be spirit filled doesn’t mean that he is less significant in the eyes of God. We must stop thinking that God gives preferential treatment to one group of believers over another because one chooses to walk in more of the word than the other.

On the contrary, wouldn’t it be more like God to have those who have chosen to walk in more of the light of His word to be sensitive and compassionate to those who, for whatever reason, are walking in less understanding. That being the case, the idea; “We can’t fellowship with those folks because we don’t believe the same way”, might be replaced with; “Let’s gather together around all the wonderful aspects of redemption and the new birth.”

When you look around and see all the good churches striving to teach God’s word doesn’t it seem like a lot of well-meaning people allowed secondary issues to divide them from fellow believers? In other words, instead of keeping “the main thing the main thing” they allowed something secondary to become so big in their hearts and minds that they were willing to separate themselves from their brothers and sisters.

Isn’t that just like the devil, to try and divide believers from one other, as well as, God? A perfect example was in the garden where he began by dividing the woman from the man using questions about God’s word. Ultimately, the devil was able to not only come between the man and woman, but between man and God. To this day, you can still see the enemy successfully coming between believers using God’s word as the point of contention.

Look at these words by Paul in Ephesians 4:14-16 and notice the picture of unity being painted here and how wrong doctrine is so detrimental.

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; (15) But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: (16) From whom the body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the

measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

Referring back to the theme; “Keeping the main thing the main thing”, look at what Paul warns the church not to do. He admonished them, **and us**, not to be blown around with every wind of doctrine by people whose specific mission it is to deceive. Although, it is possible to be just as deceived by someone whose intention isn’t necessarily to be deceptive. “What do you mean Mark?”

Consider this, because of the pride in the hearts of many people they have a driving determination to be right. Even though they aren’t intentionally trying to deceive people the end result is just as damaging as an intentional deceiver and maybe even worse. Worse in the fact that they think they are right when actually they are wrong and unwilling to see it any other way.

Isn’t the “main thing”, which must remain the central message of the church, Jesus Christ and Him crucified? This life-changing message of our new birth, entrance into the family of God, and our freedom from sin, stands alone. It cannot take a back seat to any pet doctrine that could potentially divide the body of Christ.

What’s dangerous is when those pet doctrines become so important to the group that they “circle the wagons”, so to speak. Instead of elevating the message of the Lordship of Jesus they gather around those secondary issues. Eventually, the central theme is no longer about Jesus, but rather about the kind of clothes they wear, whether or not the church allows music, the length of hair, and on and on it goes.

All of these secondary issues are generally supported by scriptures that have been taken out of context with the purpose being to prove our little group has it all right. The end result being that we have a group on this corner who talk more about how to dress than the message of salvation or the new birth and a group right across the street that has no music in the services. They are all pointing their fingers at each other claiming the other ones are wrong and they are right. Sadly, this describes so much of what we have come to accept as the Christian church.

Go back to what Paul said, ***“From whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth.”*** What is the picture that is painted in your mind when you hear the words, “fitly joined together”? This is the way you would describe how all the parts and pieces of a building come

together to form one single building. It is also the same way a person would describe how all the parts and pieces of a body come together to form one body.

The unique aspect of a body is how all the individual parts, although they have different roles, come together with one common purpose, the overall growth and success of the body. If any one part of a person's body lost sight of the overall goal and focused on a secondary, inferior goal, that part would become more of a liability rather than a contributing member. Think about the confusion that rogue member might cause to the whole body as it refused to join in step and demanded instead to go its own way.

Now, consider how confused the world must be as to what Christianity is really about? There are so many mixed messages coming from the church that I can't see how anyone on the outside could know what was right. Even worldly people know that when you market something it is important to maintain a clear message as you present your product to the public. If a company markets something to the public with all kinds of contradictory messages about their product the public is confused and the product fails in the market place.

We have the greatest news known to mankind. Giving this message to the world should be like shooting fish in a barrel and yet it's not. Mostly, I believe, because we as a whole have failed to keep the main thing the main thing. We have been so concerned with promoting the issues that separate us from all the other churches that it seems to me we have fallen short on delivering the message that really changes people's lives. I'm not just talking about a church service. I'm talking about our daily lives as believers.

Let's show the world that we have the capacity to love one another as Jesus has loved us, because it's this love that will draw others to Jesus. By keeping Jesus in the forefront of everything we do we are in fact, "Keeping the main thing the main thing."

~ Jesus Loves You!

Mark Jenkins