

Does it Matter?

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In the religious world today, there exists a sense of freedom to change and innovate doctrine and the practice of one's faith. These changes and innovations are often in direct violation of the inspired Scriptures. Consider, for example, how some denominations have embraced same-sex marriages. To accept such a practice clearly defies biblical authority (cf. Gen. 2:24-25; Matt. 19:4; etc.).

Even within churches of Christ, there are those seeking to change and innovate, despite a lack of Scriptural support for the changes and innovations they seek. Lacking authority from the Bible, more aggressive methods for change are being implemented. One brother in Christ wrote about a conference he attended at Lipscomb University titled "The Fierce Urgency of Now: Strategies for Social Change Within the Churches of Christ." Here is a portion of what he wrote regarding his experience:

The title of the session concerning social change interested me because of my work on reaching out in my local community. Naïvely, I believed the session would address evangelistic strategies in connecting with the downtrodden within local communities. This was not the case.

Instead, the session was dealing with forcing a feminist agenda within the fellowship of the churches of Christ. I was surprised. The session used 1 Corinthians 4:20 as the thematic text. The verse states: "For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power" (ESV). The leader of the panel discussion noted that the time for talk within the churches of Christ on gender equality has come to an end. Now, those who are advocates of this position were advised to use political power to force the churches of Christ to embrace full immersion of women within official leadership in the church....

At the end of this panel discussion, I realized that a united effort is underway to change the churches of Christ through insurgent influences. The public persona of those seeking to instill erroneous change is one that invites public discussion, but seeks to cast off the shackles of biblical teachings to embrace a hermeneutic of subjective feel-good authorization. Instead of following the plain teachings of the Word of God, these advocates teach that feeling a particular giftedness means full authorization for those actions God forbids within the Word.

(Matthew Morine, Gospel Advocate, September, 2015, p. 20.)

Matthew Morine's experience should cause us all to think about the extent that some will go in order to bring about changes for which there is no biblical authority.

In addition to changes in gender roles for positions of leadership, there are those who are seeking to add instruments of music into worship, or other unscriptural practices. Again, lacking New Testament authority, a feel-good kind of hermeneutic is used to (mis)interpret the Scriptures.

Sadly, many today approach the work of the church, and being a child of God, as if it doesn't matter what one believes and practices. As long as the change feels good, or is in keeping with the current day's accepted norm, the change can, and should, be embraced.

However, throughout the Scriptures, there is a warning given in numerous examples, inferences, and commands, that it matters very much what one practices and believes with respect to their faith.

Consider some important examples in Scripture that illustrate, even things which seem inconsequential to us, matter greatly to God.

In Leviticus 10:1-3, Nadab and Abihu learned that fire was not just fire to God. The source of fire greatly mattered to the Almighty. If the source of fire mattered so much to God, then it should have mattered to Nadab and Abihu.

David learned the hard way that how the ark was moved really mattered to God (2 Samuel 6:1-8). A convenient innovation, such as a cart to move the ark, turned out to be anything but a good change. God wanted the ark moved, as we sometimes say, "the old fashioned way." If moving the ark according to Scripture mattered to God, then it should have mattered to David. Fortunately, David later consulted the Scriptures and learned the error of his thinking (1 Chronicles 15:1-2). It is hoped more today would be so wise as to do the same!

King Saul learned that who offers the sacrifice really mattered to God (1 Samuel 13:8-14). When Samuel was delayed, Saul thought, "What harm could it be? Does it really matter?" Such careless thinking (just as we are seeing today) led him into disobedience. The one who was authorized to take the lead and offer the sacrifice mattered to God, and it should have mattered to Saul. The limitations imposed by God for positions of leadership today, should matter to those seeking to change God's stated limitations.

In the New Testament, we see that even the method and meaning of one's baptism matters to God.

It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 19:1-5

Just as fire was not just fire, or moving an ark required strict obedience, how and why one is baptized matters very much to God. The Bible clearly speaks of baptism in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins, in order for one to be saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; etc.).

Jesus tells us how and why we worship God matters. Remember these words?

God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

John 4:24

God has very specific ways that He wants us to worship Him. They are clearly delineated in Scripture. When we seek to change or innovate what God has authorized, so that we are

in violation of His will, our fate will be no different than that of Nabab, Abihu, or King Saul. If how and why we worship matters to God, then it ought to matter to us.

Numerous other examples could be cited that illustrate the grand truth, that our staying true to His word matters very much to God. As such, it should matter to us! Elders and preachers cannot teach, preach, emphasize, or illustrate enough, the importance of being able to establish Scriptural authority for all we say and do as individual Christians, and collectively as local bodies of believers.

And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

2 John 1:6