

Everyone Wins

(06/25/04)

Greetings to the Group That Used to Meet at Betsy's House,

As a salesperson I can recall hearing another salesperson say something that has stuck with me through the years. We were talking about the benefits of being in sales. It was wonderful, we agreed, because what you made was up to the individual, we could set our own times, work as hard and long as we wanted and were pretty much our own boss. He concluded, however, it would be perfect if it weren't for one thing, "it's those darn people who mess it up".

That sure is right isn't it---we, as humans, can be such a problem. We can be at one moment lovable and fun and the next cantankerous and difficult.

Is there any way to mitigate against that universal problem, especially when it come to communicating the gospel?

One of my favorite passages in Isaiah 1:18 addresses this problem. It is a passage that records what God is saying to Israel through the prophet, "'Come now, let us reason together,' says the Lord"

In this approach the Lord is reaching out to Israel to respond from a position, or desire, based upon reason not one that finds it's origin in emotions or demands.

How honoring it is that He, Almighty God, would stoop to such a position. He could do anything He desires in order to bring about the desired response He wants. He could destroy the very world in which we now live and still be perfect in all that He is.

It is easy to deduce, therefore, that correct behavior for it's own sake is not what it is all about. God wanted Israel, in the text cited, to understand and that required discourse, verbal interchange.

The fact that God has chosen to reveal Himself in His Word, both the Lord and the written Word, indicates that understanding is His first choice in relating to mankind.

If, however, we fail to respond to reason He will take other methods of control in order to protect man and provide the opportunity for "reason" at some other occasion. An example of that is found in the purpose of the Law. It acts as a "guardian", Galatians 3:23, it held us prisoners. Further, we are taught in 4:1-7, that "the basic principles" of the world were like "tutors" which restricts "children" until their maturity.

In Proverbs 9:8 we learn "Rebuke not a scorner, lest he hate thee: Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee".

When we look at these teachings together we will begin to see that the way God deals with us, and therefore teaches us to do likewise, is predicated on the person. Each person is different and our approach must be suited to our knowledge and understanding of them.

In other words, there is no "cookie cutter" way to deal with every person but reason is the ideal. Failing that we must then seek alternative ways depending on our assessment of who they are. As we do that we must be guided in our response with the mind of God as revealed in His Word. Understanding God, a transformed mind and a sensitivity to man are the key ingredients in good communications and a desired change or action.

We must learn to control our own fleshly impulses that are always in the forefront. To give way to our fleshly passion is to put ourselves, once again, under it's hellish dominion. Self control is a important fruit of the Spirit at noted in Galatians 5:22. "Self-control" is a translation of "egkrateia" in the Greek. It means "mastery or dominion over".

What then in the past, i.e. troublesome people, was a bother now becomes a opportunity to grow. Quarrelsome people are now seen in a very different light---a light that is both good for you and good for them. Everyone wins--"all things God works to good". All that we need is a CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE, GOD'S POINT OF VIEW!!!

See you Friday,

Tomme