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DANGERS OF REMEMBERED RELIGION

The late Bill Hinson, pastor of the first Methodist Church in Houston, once told a story about Roy Smith who was raised in a small Kansas mill town. Part of a poor mill worker's family, he had a part in the school play. He wasn't sure how they afforded it, but his family managed to save enough money so that he could have a new pair of shoes to wear in that play. The day before the play was to open, they were practicing at the school when someone rushed into the room and said, "Roy, come quick. There's been an accident down at the mill and your dad's been hurt." Roy rushed down to the mill in that little town, but he got there too late. His dad was already dead. On a cold, windy day, they buried his dad.

A few days later, he went down to the mill to pick up his dad's tools and clothes. Someone had thoughtfully taken those overalls, folded them up and put them under his tools; his dad's old brogans were on top and turned them upside down so that the soles were sticking up. Roy said, "I opened up that tool box and looked down at those shoes that my dad had been wearing the day he was killed, and they had holes in both soles. And I got to thinking of my dad standing on that cold steel floor with those shoes with holes in them so that I could have a new pair of shoes for that play." He said, "There came a numbness to my soul that I had never gotten over until this day."

Then Dr. Hinson said, "If we ever get over that numbness in our soul of what God did for us one day, then we are sunk."

One of the dangers of the church today is that we run on the residue of remembered religion. We must all be scorched – every generation scorched – with the fires from the holy mountain. We need a fresh experience with God. We can't live off the experience of our parents. We can't have a second generational experience. The challenge for all of us is to keep our spiritual experience up to date. Like Timothy we can let the fire of devotion go out (II Timothy 1:6).

ON PREACHING

In the 1997 Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching, Barbara Brown Taylor said, "Our brains protect us from the daily barrage of words by increasing our resistance to them. Recent studies show that most people only recall about 25 percent of what they heard in the past few days. We do not listen well, and at least part of it is because we listen much faster than most people can talk.

"While most people speak at a rate of 120-150 words a minute, we can process more than 500 words a minute, which makes it hard for us to stay tuned to prolonged communications, especially if the speaker is halting or dull. We tend to use the lag time in a conversation to compose our own responses, which makes us even poorer listeners." (*When God Is Silent* by Barbara Brown Taylor, Cowley Publications, Boston, MA)

LEADERSHIP

World War I flying ace Eddie Rickenbacker said it all when he remarked, "I can give you a six-word formula for success: Think things through – then follow through." Ideas have a short shelf life. You must act on them before the expiration date.

"Character is the key to leadership. Research at Harvard University indicates that 85 percent of a leader's performance depends on personal character." (Warren Bennis, organizational consultant and author)

The five pillars of leadership:

1. Crystallize your thinking.
2. Develop a written plan of action.
3. Create a desire and passion.
4. Develop confidence and trust.
5. Foster commitment and responsibility.

(*The Five Pillars of Leadership* by Paul J. Meyer, p. 69)

ILLUSTRATION

The late E.V. Hill, a pastor from California and a popular speaker at many of our Baptist meetings, had a sign in front of his church that read, "Conservative, liberal, militant." One day, somebody asked him what it meant.

He replied, "Conservative means we believe every verse in the Bible. Liberal means we'll give our coat to any man that needs it. Militant means that we aren't waiting for the devil to bring the battle to us; we are assaulting the gates of hell."

QUOTES

- "Raising kids is part joy and part guerrilla warfare." Ed Asner, actor
- "God would have us not merely 'take a stand.' He would have us walk. Too many have taken a stand and are still standing; for years they have made no progress." Vance Havner, preacher and author

A CHALLENGE TO MINISTERS

To succeed all you need to do is find a need and fill it, find a hurt and heal it. Cecil Sherman, retired minister, tells the following story: "I am reminded of the beginnings of Georgia Baptist Hospital. Lenny Broughton, pastor of Baptist Tabernacle in Atlanta, called the hospital into being. A reporter...asked Dr. Broughton how he could start a hospital. 'Do you have any land?' The answer was no. 'Do you have any money?' Again the answer was no. 'Well, what do you have?' Dr. Broughton replied, 'Sick people.'

"That's the way BTSR was born. They had nothing but an obvious need, and the planners stepped out on faith."

It is easy to be oblivious to the obvious. The challenge of every minister and church is to see the obvious and step out in faith to meet it.

NEW BOOK

If you attend this year's Baptist General Convention of Texas meeting Nov. 16-17 in Houston, I hope you will come by the Truett Seminary booth for a free copy of my new book, *Raising Peanuts in a Gold Field*.

SERMON OUTLINE

Title Missions our Mission

Text Acts 1:6-8

Introduction No church needs to sit around wondering what it is to do. Nor do they need to spend their time writing a mission statement. To do so is an exercise in futility. The Lord has already given us our mission statement. We may restate it in some clever way but we cannot improve on his and we don't have permission to change it.

Look at his command:

- I Our mission: to be his witnesses.
- II Our message: Jesus. The Jesus of prophecy, the Jesus of history, the Jesus of experience.
- III Our method: the church going into the world.

Conclusion You can sit in a pew until you mildew. We need to get up and get on with our Lord's command.

REMEMBER

George W. Truett Seminary is a Christ-centered, Bible-based seminary committed to our historic Baptist principles. Our vision is to be the premiere Baptist theological seminary of the world. Our mission is to serve the churches by training the next generation of ministers and missionaries.



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