

Back to the Basics

Written by Josh Winslett

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I greatly enjoy college football. In general, the fall is my favorite season; family, football, great weather, holidays, lots of extra church meetings, etc. At the end of every football season I look back and assess the highs and lows. The wins and losses. There are teams with high velocity offenses. There are teams with hard physical defenses. I am amazed every year at each teams strategy and how the drama unfolds. I have often asked myself, "what makes a winning team?" There are teams that win through trick plays and flashy performances. But the most consistently winning programs have not been flashy. Most of the winnigest programs have just focused on the basics.

Let me explain. What makes someone become efficient at a task? There are two ways this takes place.

1. Practice makes perfect. I'm sure you remember this annoying line from when you were a child. Well unfortunately, it is true. Usually, you will never become good at a task without enduring hours upon hours of practice. Perseverance through diversity is the only way to find lasting finality to your goals.

2. Get back to the basics. This idea may be so obvious that it is almost offensive. What is it that

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a person practices to become good at a task? Is it the hardest possible task? Ironically, no. Have you ever seen football teams practice? They don't practice the most flashy trick plays over and over again. They usually practice the basics; ball control, routes, endurance, blocking, snap count, etc. You see, to be successful at a task takes being good at the basic fundamentals of that task.

So, why am I telling you all of this? As American Christians it is very easy for us to get caught up into novelty and fads. We are very often like the Athenians who "spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing." We think that to be Super Saint and Radical Christians we have to be at the forefront and cutting edge of technology, evangelistic ideas, and cultural fads. We seek to be the most user friendly. I do want to point out that there is nothing wrong with technology or looking for relevant evangelistic avenues. I myself am involved in different internet ministries. I also keep up with the different and ever changing winds of American Christianity. Nevertheless, what really makes a difference in Christian discipleship and church growth? I would contend that it is just as simple as getting back to the basics.

I do want to add that any church growth, whether personal spiritual or collective physical, is only given by the Lord of the harvest. God gives the increase.

Moving on.....

How does a Christian get back to the basics? There are two specific areas I would like to briefly

cover (though there are others).

1. Charity- What is the greatest test of Christian servitude? It is not the way we talk. It is not the nicest new building. It is not the shiniest new young pastor. It is not the most "relevant" congregation. It is charity. We usually would describe love in terms of beauty and romance, but in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul describes beauty as an action. He does not describe love as a beautiful flower or as "happily ever after", but he describes it as forgiving and forbearing. What was it that proved the sheep were chosen of God in Matthew 25? Love! Roman emperor Hadrian sent Aristedes to investigate the new sect called 'Christians' in the 2nd century. Aristedes sent back this message, "They love one another; they never fail to help widows; they have something, they give freely to the man who has nothing; they receive stranger and treat him as if he were a real brother; they don't consider themselves brothers in the usual sense, but brothers instead through the Spirit, in God." Without love, the greatest pursuit of Christianity is but a vain and empty show of religion. Love and gratitude towards God should be our basic motivation, and this motivation should be displayed through love and fellowship towards others. In Acts 2, those that were baptized were described as continuing "daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart...." This is one thing that the world is starving for, true and lasting genuine love and fellowship.

2. Doctrine- Doctrine seems to hold some sort of evil connotation to it in today's time. That is very unfortunate, because without proper doctrine conversion can become just a pragmatic event in a person's life. Discipleship and church growth must be built on a proper foundation of truth. It is said that doctrine only divides. Is that a proper Christian attitude? Should Christians only focus on practical things and avoid taking any strong stance about fundamental beliefs concerning salvation, morality, church practice, etc.? Doctrine is most certainly important! The church is defined by Paul as a pillar that upholds the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). Doctrine delivers (1 Tim. 4:16). We are commanded to not be tossed about with every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). We are commanded to mark those who teach doctrine contrary to bible doctrine (Rom. 16:17). Think about it. If doctrine is not important, then what are people repenting from and converting

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to? Again, in acts Chapter 2, what was it that the newly baptized disciples continued within? Doctrine!

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. " -Acts 2:42

Doctrine controls the way we think about God. Charity control the way others think about us. The more we know about God, the more we love each other. The more we love each other, the more we know about God. It is the constant circle of true primitive Christianity. The best advice I could give to a new convert is to love others and study the word. After they had done that I would tell them to go study the word and love others. I would give the same advice to "seasoned vet."

What is it that America Christians need? Is it another fad? Is it entertainment? Do we need the best and most relevant marketing campaign? We need charity and truth. Charity and truth rightly applied is always relevant. We need to get back to the basis.