

THE FOREST HILL NEWS



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Bible Study..... 9:30 A.M.
Morning Worship.....10:30 A.M.
Evening Worship..... 5:00 P.M.

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I Got Used To It

Barry Grider

A number of years ago I wrote an article with the above title pointing out that with regard to many errors, innovations, and apostasies people just get used to them. While some may be uncomfortable at first with an unscriptural practice, the longer they sit and observe and participate in the error, the easier it becomes to accept. While I stand by that article, I would also like to highlight another dangerous attitude.

Unfortunately there will always be an element in the brotherhood who because of their weak faith are always resistant to any kind of change. While some changes are unnecessary, inexpedient, and unscriptural, not all change is bad. Jesus not only changed the Jewish system, He completely abolished it (Eph. 2:15). Of course, we can never deviate from the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9) for it is in effect until the Lord comes again (Mat. 28:20). However, under the Christian system there is still latitude, expediency, and judgment in certain areas. For example, we are authorized to sing in the assembly (Heb. 2:12). Concerning singing, Paul writes, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). Based upon New Testament teaching all in the assembly are to sing and we are to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Furthermore, there is no scripture authorizing the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship and, therefore, such should not be used. We cannot compromise in this area. It should also be noted that we do not sing the latest billboard hits, but rather psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Still some try to legislate as to which psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs can be sung. As long as these songs are scriptural in content, they are good to sing. It is interesting that some Christians can heartily sing a song with Calvinistic overtones such as "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less" but refuse to sing "Our God is An Awesome God." Why? One is old and the other is not. One they are used to singing and the other they are not. Most can sing "We Praise Thee O God, for Thy Spirit of Light" but some refuse to sing "Sweet, Sweet Spirit." Why? They are used to singing one, the other they are not. Neither song teaches the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, yet the Spirit is to be worshipped. Most can sing songs that address God with "Thee" and "Thou" but some refuse to sing songs that address God with the more common "You" and "Your". Why? Because someone told them a long time ago that is how it was supposed to be and they simply got used to it. Why do some cling to songbooks and reject the more advanced technology of songs projected on a screen? Because they are used to singing from a songbook.

We must be very careful not to bind where our Lord did not bind. Nothing prevents or hinders the church moving forward than this attitude or mindset. Let us be diligent in our pursuit of truth, but let us not legislate for others where God has not legislated, simply because we may not be used to doing something a particular way.

Binding Where God Has Not

Tyler Young

[Editor's Note: The following article is an excerpt of material prepared by brother Young for the 2008 Lubbock Lectureship.]

We can also be guilty of legalistic distortion of God's law if we require or forbid what God does not, equating our traditions or opinions with God's law, or even elevating them above God's law. The antinomian looses where God has bound; the legalist binds where God has not.

Once more, the Pharisees perfected this perversion, combining their preoccupation with externals with their own traditions. In his accounts of their confrontation with Jesus over this issue, Mark offers this explanatory note: "(For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders; and when they come from the market-place, except they bathe themselves, they eat not; and many other things there are, which they have received to hold, washings of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels)" (Mark 7:2-4). They confronted Jesus for his disciples' disregard for their ritual hand-washing tradition: "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread" (Mat. 15:2).

Jesus replied with a rebuke: "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?" (15:3). He condemned a loophole they had created (another manifestation of legalism that could be treated as a separate point) to free themselves from having to keep the fifth commandment of the Decalogue, adding, "Ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (15:7-9). Here is a virtual summary of legalistic offenses: externalism (concerned only with the outward appearance, rather than genuine devotion to God); hypocrisy; circumvention of God's commands; binding man-made traditions. They were guilty on all accounts. Combining the language from Matthew and Mark's accounts, their legalism was characterized by the Lord as transgressing, leaving, rejection and making void the word of God (Mark 7:8-9).

There are different ways we can end up doing, in essence, the same thing today. Considerable

division and destruction has been caused in the body of Christ over the past generation or so by those who erred in forbidding what God's word authorizes, binding where God has not bound. We label as "anti" those brethren who condemn the use of multiple communion cups, Bible classes, located preachers, congregational cooperation in evangelism, eating a meal together on church property, having a kitchen in the church building, supporting orphan homes or paying for benevolent aid for any non-saint from the church treasury. Just as the apostles did not tolerate those who sought to bind circumcision and similar aspects of the law of Moses (Acts 15:1ff; Titus 2:3ff), so we cannot countenance modern efforts to forbid what God allows.

We can also become legalists if we bind our judgments or preferences on others, making them "tests of fellowship." Which translations of the Bible are permissible for teaching and preaching? May we sing "youth" or "camp" songs in worship? What about the order of worship? May we have small group meetings on Sunday night instead of a second general assembly? Is it wrong to move or cancel the evening worship on Superbowl Sunday? Is it "liberal" to have a youth minister or a church van to transport youth to church related activities? Or have coffee and doughnuts during Bible class? Or erect a basketball hoop on the church parking lot? Or use images in a PowerPoint presentation during the sermon? What about images (supposedly) of Jesus or other Bible characters or scenes? Is it necessarily a sin to miss a weekly service of the church to compete in a sporting event, or a second Sunday service while traveling? Is it a sin for mothers to work outside the home? We may have strong convictions about these and other, similar issues (and this writer most definitely has serious concerns with several of these items); but can we demand conformity to our views in areas where there is room for judgment or disagreement within the boundaries of God's law? To do so moves us beyond the law of God into legalism, legislating for God.

I Drew My Circle Again

When I first became a member of the church, my circle was very big...for it included all who, like myself, had believed and been baptized. I was happy in the thought that my brethren were many...but—having a keen and observant mind—I soon learned that many of my brethren were erring. I could not tolerate any people within my circle but those who, like myself, were right on all points of doctrine and practice. Too, some made mistakes and sinned. What could I do? I had to do something! I drew my circle, placed myself and a few as righteous as I within, and the others without. I soon observed that some within my circle were self-righteous, unforgiving, jealous, and proud, so in righteous indignation, my circle I drew again, leaving the Publicans and sinner outside, excluding the Pharisees in all their pride, with myself and the righteous and humble within. I heard ugly rumors about some brethren. I saw then that some of them were worldly minded; their thoughts were constantly on things of a worldly nature, they drank coffee, when, like me, they should drink tea. So duty bound, to save my reputation, I drew my circle again, leaving those reputable, spiritually-minded within. I soon realized in time that only my family and I remained in the circle. I had a good family, but to my surprise, my family finally disagreed with me. I was always right. A man must be steadfast. I have never been a factious man! So in strong determination I drew my circle again, leaving me quite alone.

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