

Is It Time To Change? 05-15-16AM

From time to time sections of the Lord's church examine the issue of change. Whether it is acceptable to not is the debate in which many are caught up. Changes in the last century to the Lord's church include:

- Moving to electric lighting
- Addition of the overhead projection
- Creation of church sponsored schools
- Ending of support of evangelistic institutions
- Adding a second worship service
- Using new translations of the Bible
- Ending of segregation of congregations

Today there are still matters which some have an interest in changing:

- Moving from two services to one
- Moving Bible studies from Wednesday to Thursday
- Revising five steps to being saved
- Changing the name "Church of Christ"
- Moving to electronic Bibles / Songbooks
- Reconsidering CENI method of authority
- Reexamining five aspects to worship

When we look at these two lists (changes of the past and changes of today), we will probably see that some of these changes were/ are necessary (such as ending institutional support, ending segregation), some changes are not necessary but are reasonable and allowed (electricity, new translations, times of services), and some changes are sinful (creating church sponsored schools, revising CENI or plan of salvation). We need to understand when change is appropriate, necessary or sinful. To do so we need to ask the right questions: is it change for perfection? Is it change for the sake of change?

The Problem With Change for the Sake of Change: There is a problem with change for the sake of change. It reflects a carnal attitude (which is contrary to the mind of God), and it usually results in weakness or error. When people want to change for the sake of change itself, they usually make the case for the need to "energize" or "enliven" thoughts or deeds, and they usually denigrate the "old paths". The need to enliven ourselves with change is worldly, and dismissing the way things have been done for simply being the old ways is sinful (Jeremiah 6:16, Proverbs 22:28, Proverbs 23:10, Proverbs 24:21).

The Problem With Changing Doctrinal Purposes: Often the problems with change arise because of a lack of understanding of authority. It is the case that some things might be considered "traditional", and therefore changes may be appropriate. We describe these things as expediencies; means by which we accomplish an authorized task. We are commanded to go preach the Gospel; expediency asks the question "what is the most appropriate / useful way to "go"? We recognize that expediency itself changes due to time and culture, and we are authorized to change expediency means (so long as it is not for the sake of change itself). Expedient changes might include Gospel Meeting schedules/frequency, times of worship, means of singing (songbooks or overheads), translations of Bible, and projection devices.

However, there are matters that are NOT expedient that may require change. Matters that are not expedient include ending support of institutions or ending church segregation. If we are in error, we must change, and we are authorized to change (consider the authority of repentance).

But the most difficult (and perhaps dangerous) are is when matters of doctrine are confused with expediency, and changes as such. For example, the five steps to being saved are NOT an expedient way of preaching the Gospel, but a true pattern (Acts 9:4, Acts 11:14, Hebrews 6:1-2). The identity of the "Church of Christ" is not an expedient, but a name by which we must be saved (1 Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 4:12, Romans 12:5). The manner in which we can confirm authority (Command, Example and Necessary Inference, CENI) was NOT created by men as an expedient, but is a pattern of understanding found in Scripture (Hebrews 6:1-2, 1 Corinthians 4:6). The matters we consider to be acts of worship (Singing, Praying, a Collection, Communion, and a message of Scripture) are not man made devices, but a pattern from God (Acts 2:42, 1 Corinthians, 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Change is something that we must approach with care, knowing that it can cause harm as well as good. Sometimes we MUST change; sometimes we CAN change; sometimes we CANNOT change, and we must apply principles of Biblical adherence to know how to act. When we consider change, we must ask ourselves whether it is it for expediency or carnality, and whether it is a matter of expediency or authority. Finally, we need to understand that at the root of unsupportable change is a heart that does not seek the Lord.