

RELEVANCE AND RETICENCE

That the Gospel is not being made relevant to our day and generation is a common charge today. Is it true that lack of relevance is really our problem in communicating the Gospel to our generation? Or could the trouble be reticence on the part of those who should be communicating it? Reticence means "being inclined to keep silent or uncommunicative."

Certainly the Gospel itself is not irrelevant. God has no other way of salvation than believing in Jesus Christ as one's own Savior; there is no other message that proclaims this but the Gospel. This message is still pointedly relevant to man's need in the twentieth century; man's basic need has not changed. Neither civil rights nor space exploration nor any other achievement of mankind has been able to give him peace with God, with others, and with himself. God has no other good news to meet this basic need than the unchanging Gospel.

To be sure, some of our current evangelism may be irrelevant. In some instances it is irrelevant because the proclamation has little or no content. In other cases, the method of proclaiming the truth is unwise or unattractive. There is no justifiable excuse for either kind of irrelevancy.

But isn't the basic lack something else? We do not really question the fact that the Gospel is the only message that can meet man's need even in this day. We are certainly not bereft of good methods. Indeed, since the church began, Christians have never had available for their use a greater variety of excellent helps. Our lack is not so much in how we communicate the Gospel but in communicating it at all.

Teaching a Sunday school class can be relevant; being afraid to witness to the clerk at the supermarket is reticence. Living a changed life is most relevant; but never accompanying it with a pointed oral testimony is reticence. Fellowship with other Christians is relevant; but fellowship only with other Christians may indicate reticence to reach the unsaved.

To give someone a poorly printed tract is irrelevance; never to hand out a tract is reticence. To buttonhole people on the street is irrelevance; never inviting an unsaved friend to dinner in your own home is reticence. Witnessing without courtesy and tact is irrelevance; never opening your mouth to witness is reticence.

Perhaps the contemporary cry for relevance ought to be preceded by a call to overcome reticence. One of the best ways I know to overcome reticence in witnessing is to pray daily a prayer something like this: "Lord, make me alert to opportunities to witness for Thee today." Try it. God might just answer!

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EDITORIAL

946 Relevance and Reticence

ARTICLES

945 Where Does It Happen, and When?

949 Gifts of the Spirit's Free Bounty

960 Special Report: Omaa

LESSON FOR DECEMBER 27

THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN

Matthew 2:1-12

951 Verse by Verse

953 The Bible for Today

954 Teaching by Discussion

954 Straight Talk for Teens

955 For Junior Teachers

955 Teaching Primaries

956 From the Platform

956 The Illustration Round Table

958 What Do You Want To Know?

FEATURES

947 Things You Should Know About

958 Picture Highlights of Bible Times

959 For Family Worship

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