

## ESSENTIALS FOR OUR MILLENNIUM - Part 3

By Carl McMurray

We are a strange people I believe. Most of us generally like the kind of music that was popular when we came to adulthood. We continue to prefer that for most of our lives and have difficulty understanding how others can appreciate types of music that are so different. We are stuck in a time warp. Many of us think that children ought to be raised like we were raised, while at the same time knowing that we would never allow our children or grandchildren to “run the streets” all day until dark without checking in at home... the way *we* did when growing up.

Sometimes we are like that with the gospel also. We wonder why people don't just hear and obey the way we did when we first came to the truth. Why don't gospel meetings have many baptisms like they did in the “good old days?” The truth is that here also we are in a time warp. The world has changed just like it has always changed. The generation that lives here now is not the same people that were here decades ago and their experiences are not the same. Thus their responses are not going to be the same. That's the reasoning behind this series of articles.

What kind of world do we live in? A “niche” world, a computerized world, and even more! The first two parts of this series dealt with those things, but we also live in a “complex” world. Shade tree mechanics are becoming fewer and fewer in this age of microchip-run automobiles. Just building a tool shed can become a nightmare of permits, zoning, and inspections. One friend told of his long distance provider that gave him great rates but demanded that he dial 36 numbers for a long distance call by the time he dialed code numbers, pin numbers, access numbers and the number itself. I can see why you'd save money on long distance bills - you'd refrain from the trouble of calling.

Religion has not escaped increasing complexity. As denominational churches have added doctrines and rules, their creed books have grown thicker with the changes. Their membership classes have gotten longer and their explanation for erroneous doctrines has become more lengthy as they try to make unbiblical teaching sound biblical.

Of course the natural answer to this all is that people are looking for simplicity. We all have enough headaches and stress without love and faith becoming one also. And frankly, most people in our culture are just not motivated enough to go to the trouble to endure much difficulty for spirituality, a subject they know very little about anyway.

This ought to be our forte'. We have the easiest truth to understand of any group claiming to believe the Bible. We don't have to explain “salvation by faith alone” when James teaches faith and works go together. We don't have to explain away baptism while the Scriptures teach the necessity of it. All we have to do is learn our Bibles and point folks to the Scriptures. Although many have made it their hobby, we don't have to be learning about and attacking other churches all the time. All we have to know and teach is the truth. Just point people to where they can read it for themselves. And we have the confidence that our God knows and has presented us with the best path to salvation that will work in every age and every culture. What a blessing we've been given.

Local families of God's people are autonomous. There are no unseen and far off representatives, law making councils, or headquarters to answer to. When a guest stops by and checks out one of our congregations - what he sees is what he gets. Got a question? There's a shepherd standing nearby and the buck stops there in every congregation. How about discipline problems? They're all handled within the walls and judgment of the local church. That's the scriptural pattern - no outside interference. Suggestions for outreach? Each congregation determines what is most expedient and effective for their own area and abilities. Is this a simple arrangement or what?

In a complex world, the simple, yet effective nature of New Testament Christianity ought to be attractive. All we do is follow the pattern. We approach and serve our God the way the New Testament Christians did. Simple.

Its up to us to get the message out, however. Unfortunately in many places fussing, fighting, and self-serving has made obedience to the gospel appear more difficult than it really is. We must present the message of Christ in unity, joy, and peace. With a smile let's put the message of peace out there for the world to see. They're looking for simplicity and the simple gospel of our Lord is what all men need.