

Repetition, Repetition, Repetition

It's been well said that there are three ways to learn something: Repetition, repetition, repetition. When a sports team practices, it practices the same plays over and over again almost to the point of tedium. The reason for this is that when the team gets into an actual game, it will know what to do. No matter how the other side lines up, no matter what the particular game situation might be, no matter how great the pressure might be, the team will be able to bring to mind what it has been taught day after day, week after week and apply it as needed.

The application of this principle of repetition can be made in the spiritual realm. The more we study God's Word and become familiar with it, the more we will know what to do in life. When trials come, when temptations pressure us, when situations that demand a decision arise, with the knowledge of the Word of God we will know what to do. Isn't that what David meant when he wrote, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee"? (Psalm 119:11).

There are many commands and statements that are found numerous times in the Bible. Consider Philippians 3:2 in which Paul warns the brethren, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." The word "concision" means "to cut up, mutilation." Paul is referring to the Judaizing teachers of the first century who were trying to get Christians to go back and keep the old law with its sacrifices, feast and fasts and rite of circumcision. Verse two is prefaced with this statement recorded in verse one: "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." The New Testament contains many exhortations to the church to beware of these particular false teachers. Paul writes, "I've told you this before but it's no trouble for me to tell you again and it won't hurt you to hear it again."

I Thessalonians 4:9-10 reads, "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more." Yes, they had been taught to love each other (John 15:17) and they were demonstrating that love, but there was room for improvement and it didn't hurt for them to be reminded of this.

Now read Peter's words in II Peter 1:12: "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." Peter had just addressed the need for spiritual growth (verses 5-9) and diligence in obedience to God (verses 10-11). Yes, the brethren had heard this before but a regular reminder of the need for growth could do nothing but help them be closer to God.

We wonder why it is today that some brethren have left the faith and why entire congregations have left the moorings of God's Word to create organizations that are little less than denominations. Could it be that they did not hear enough of the "first principles" of the Gospel? Could it be that elders and preachers deemed the teaching and preaching of first principles to be boring and unnecessarily repetitious? Is it not the case that the strongest Christians and thus the strongest congregations are those who hear and study God's Word over and over again, day after day, week after week?

God's Word never grows old (Hebrews 4:12) and hearing it repeated is "safe" for us as Paul wrote. How many lessons about the love of God, the sacrifice of Christ, the commandments of God, the justice of God and other great spiritual themes equals "too much"? Let us study God's Word daily so that in drawing closer to God we "increase more and more."

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