

Feeling quite at home here in Vanity Fair, we easily grow enamored with many other things. Do we labor overtime to prove the Bible is the inerrant word of God and then live our lives preoccupied with human wisdom? We seek to impart Biblical worldview but have we reached a level of sophistication where we imagine biblical worldview need not start with knowing the Bible?

Are we too suave and refined to quote Scripture? Some say, "You can't just quote Scripture at it." Well, OK, perhaps there are such times, but what do you quote then? In many Christian circles, quoting Scripture is thought insensitive, tactless, or simplistic. One must wait for the right time, we're told, but Paul tells Timothy something quite different:

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season.
Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.
For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine,
but according to their own desires,
because they have itching ears,
they will heap up for themselves teachers (2 Tim. 4:2-3)

When Dietrich Bonhoeffer visited Union Seminary just before returning to Germany to lay his life down in defiance of Hitler, he was struck by a contrast. The very modern, suave intellectual students looked down on the benighted fundamentalist Bible-thumpers. But Bonhoeffer realized something. Those fundamentalists were far more serious (what the pastoral epistles call "sober-minded"), more dedicated to truth, than the smugly intellectual theologians who were more caught up in mutual admiration societies and witty conversation than in contending for the truth of God's word.

How serious are we about keeping God's word central in our lives? Scripture is potent. Scripture is permanent. But prioritizing Scripture in our lives and families is costly. It is so easy, slowly but surely, to let work, school, the arts, travel, movies, internet, sports, clothes, and so many other things gradually push God's words to the margins, so that you no longer talk of them "when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deut. 6). Some of you have heard this definition of a godly man: one who keeps re-starting family devotions. And I'd add to that, one who keeps re-applying himself and his family to memorizing Scripture. To paraphrase Chesterton, it's not that memorizing Scripture has been tried and found wanting; it's been found hard and not tried. But it is worth it.

Because of my Dad's long ministry, I hear an unceasing flow of testimonies of how good God's words stored in hearts have proven to be. So God save us from Christian culture without Scripture. Many would tell us that heavy engagement with Scripture is only one way of being Christian. But when they say that, they part company with Jesus and the Apostles and Prophets; they part company with the Great Commission itself, and its command to teach all the things Christ commands.

Ominous clouds lie on our culture's horizon. If this indeed be the twilight of a great civilization, let's make our families, our churches, and our communities bright with light from God's word, as "children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life . . ." (Phil. 2:15-16). So far from being a Christian culture without Scripture, may God grant us grace to be a Christian culture absorbed with Scripture, reveling in the remembering of the words of Him whom we hold most dear, speaking His word to one another and to the world in season and out of season.

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