

WHY ISN'T IT LIKE IT USED TO BE?

John 13:34-35

Introduction: No doubt progress has happened all over the world, all through the ages and some older people spend some time reflecting "back in the good old days" when things seemed simpler, although work was harder, but people were honest, etc. Take a look at the Church of today and think back to it's earlier years. Fellowship was immediate, close and everybody greeted each other with a "holy" kiss. They cared for each other's needs and shared what they had. Why were they so different then from today's average Christian?

I. CONSIDERING THE INDIVIDUAL PERSON

1. Each person had a personal experience with the Lord Jesus Christ and turned him/herself over to Him, totally, unconditionally.
2. Only the strongest conviction and determination caused anybody to publicly identify with Christians for it wasn't safe.
3. Each new Christian was immediately welcomed with open arms and hearts, proud that he/she dared to join their "outcast" group.
4. Race, wealth, sex, social class, nothing made any difference then.
5. Does race, wealth, sex, social class, etc. make a difference today?
6. Professions of faith in today's churches are "no big deal." Why not? Christians have a poor relationship with Jesus and practically NO relationship with one another.
7. Quite an assortment of people at a bridal shower - why? Everybody has a mutual interest, a love for the bride and/or groom.
8. The secret of ONENESS with the first Christians was mutual love for the same person - Jesus Christ.

II. CONSIDERING THE GROUP

1. The first Christians were distinct and conspicuous.
 - An obvious gulf existed between them and the rest of society.
 - There was nothing uncertain or fuzzy in identifying a Christian then.
2. Today it is easy to be "classified" as a Christian. There is no danger, no jail, no outcast, no mockery. It is the "normal, social" thing to do.
3. It's practically impossible to tell a Christian from an unbeliever today. Used to be that clothing and hair styles, make up, etc., would make a difference, but today life patterns are the same for both the Christian and the non-Christian.
4. What kind of relationship with the world and unbelievers did Jesus intend for Christians to have? Didn't Jesus teach believers to come out from among the world and be different?
5. The first Christian Church's (group) interest was in definite facts surrounding Jesus, such as who, what, Words, Works, death, resurrection, Promises, etc., They believed everything about Jesus.
6. Today's Church members are labeled "Christian" but they know little about Jesus Christ and what they do know is not all that significant.
7. Church's today are primarily interested in: man's needs, world problems, political issues, preservation of natural resources, social services, devotion to human issues rather than JESUS CHRIST.
8. ONENESS exists among people who have shared a common calamity, wreck, death, sickness, plane crash, etc.

9. The early Church had a ONENESS because every Christian had a common interest and love in Jesus Christ and also in OTHER BELIEVERS.

III. CHANGED PERSONS

1. The early Christians underwent a gradual process of change p from unloving, irritating, selfish persons to a CHRIST-LIKE behavior, which was the normal way of life for a Christian.
2. The Holy Spirit was allowed to work His way in their lives, setting them free from their OLD WAYS and making them into Christ-likeness.
3. Today's Churches have different ideas:
 - Evangelistic: soul-winning services ever service with nothing about the changed life and Christ-like character to be had.
 - Political: world issues, world sins, world needs, with nothing about God's standard of living for the Christian.
 - Doctrinal: issues of denominational differences, sprinkle vrs baptism, saved or lost, the unpardonable sin, etc., with nothing to help Christians mature in Christ in daily living.
4. Disunity, disharmony, etc., flourish in the Church today because UNCHANGED men and women, acting like the rest of the world try to operate Christ's Church in un-Christ ways, totally ignorant of the way Christ intends.
5. The first Christians underwent CHANGE. They shared all that they had and were with no questions. They loved one another.
6. TODAY, if a Christian gets into trouble - what happens?
7. The secret to why the early Church was ONE and recognized was because of CHANGED LIVES and the love for one another that was so obvious.

CONCLUSION:

1. The first century Christians were bound together by their shared interest in and love for Jesus Christ.
2. The first century Christians were bound together by their common interest in telling others about the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. What do Church members talk about today?
 - The Church debt, finding teachers, Church maintenance, youth programs, music programs, mission hook up in another state, getting additional staff members. Very little talk is about how much one loves the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. Today's Christians will become first century Christians when each Christian loves Jesus more than anything or any person in the world, when each Christian loves his/her Christian brother/sister as he/she loves him/herself, when Christians begin to tell others about the Lord Jesus Christ and welcoming those new believers into their midst sincerely for fellowship and growth.
5. WHERE JESUS CHRIST IS NOT FIRST, then there is disharmony.
6. "Why isn't it like it used to be?" It will be when Christians of today begin to act like Christians of the first Century.