

The New and the Old

by Coty Pinckney 08/15/08

"So much of the Christian life is not learning new things but learning fundamental things in new ways."

So wrote Tom Ascol, Executive Director of Founders Ministries, in a recent blog post. Several weeks ago he was struck by lightning - yes, literally - and is still recovering.

In this country, we have a passion for the new: New electronic gadgets, new books, new ideas, new leaders. We expect progress; we anticipate that all will improve.

The anticipation of progress is less common around the world and, from a historical viewpoint, is rather recent. Now, in many ways, believing that change is possible is helpful and necessary; indeed, a belief in change is fundamental to salvation.

But our fascination with the new has a downside also: We quite easily slip into an attitude of disdain for the old. C.S. Lewis labeled this "chronological snobbery," which he defined as "the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate of our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that count discredited" (from *Surprised by Joy* chapter 13.)

Tom's statement is an excellent summary of the right attitude towards biblical truth. We must remind ourselves and one another again and again of the great truths of the Gospel, of the great acts of God in history, of the great aspects of His character, of the great promise of Christ's return. This is how we run the race of faith with endurance.

But reminding ourselves of these fundamental truths requires more than simply reciting a known fact. We must learn them in new ways, as Tom says. We must apply these eternal truths to the changing and challenging circumstances that overwhelm us in this life.

I encourage you to meditate on these themes through the following quotations. Spur each other on to love and good works through reminding each other of these truths, and through helping each other to learn them in new ways. And thus may we remember the Lord our God!

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us-
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down through eternity.
From "Speak, O Lord," by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend,
2005

Consider Luke's barely hidden disdain for the Athenian passion for new ideas:

Acts 17:21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

Paul and Peter saw it as their duty to remind their listeners of the same truths they had taught them previously:

Philippians 3:1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.
Rom 15:15 In some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder.

2 Peter 1:12-15 Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.
13 I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder,
14 since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.
15 And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

God gave Israel annual feasts to help them remember Who He is:

Deuteronomy 16:3 You shall eat no leavened bread with it. Seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction--for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste--that all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt.

He gave them the sacrificial system, in part, to remind them of sin:

Hebrews 10:3 But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.

Remembering our own sinfulness is key, especially in times of receiving blessings:

Deuteronomy 8:17-18 Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.'
18 You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.
Deuteronomy 9:6-7 "Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people.
7 Remember and do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness.

He even gave the Israelites commands for what to wear to remind them of Himself:

Numbers 15:38-40 "Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner.
39 And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after.
40 So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God.

Yet, despite all these reminders, the Israelites for the most part forget God. This is a serious warning to us:

Psalms 78:41-42 They tested God again and again and provoked the Holy One of Israel.
42 They did not remember his power or the day when he redeemed them from the foe,

When we are despondent, we forget God, or think of Him with negative thoughts:

Psalms 77:3 When I remember God, I moan;

But as we focus on His character, His faithfulness, His promised presence with us, we can learn these

fundamental truths in new ways, and trust in Him in the midst of our crisis:

Psalm 77:11 I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old.

Psalm 42:6 My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

Consider these specific cases when biblical characters had to apply these fundamental truths in new ways:

Jonah in the belly of the great fish:

Jonah 2:7 When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.

Jesus warns His disciples of coming persecution:

John 16:4 I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

The angel to the women at the empty tomb:

Luke 24:6-8 Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7 that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." 8 And they remembered his words,

Paul in prison, about to be executed, to Timothy:

2 Timothy 2:8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel.

The risen Christ's statement to a dead church:

Revelation 3:3 Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent.

So remember the ancient truths the Lord has revealed to us. Hold on to what you know is true. Wrestle with these truths, so that you might endure to the end, for His glory:

Psalm 105:4-5 Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually! 5 Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,