

Introduction:

1. There are two places where we have a difficult time asking questions. Do you know where they are? One is the doctor's office. As people sit and wait on that cold hard exam table in the patient room, they usually have a list of questions that they plan to ask their doctor. But when he walks in with the white coat and stethoscope their entire demeanor completely changes. Their eyes get a little bit bigger, their heart begins to pound harder, and all the questions that they had in their head suddenly vanish. Sometimes the person is so intimidated to bring up their thoughts that when the doctor asks them if they have any questions, they will say no.
2. The second place is in the religious setting. You've heard the phrase being "politically correct?" There's another phrase called "religiously correct." It's the idea that no should raise any questions about someone's faith. All religious views are deemed to be correct and therefore should never be challenged. The stigma in our culture is that if you do ask a religious question, you are generally going to be viewed as antagonistic, judgmental, or argumentative.
3. The only problem with this logic is that it is not biblical (1 John 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:15). In fact, we have an example of the Apostle Paul doing this very thing. In Acts 19:1-5, we see the case of Paul questioning some people about their faith, specifically with their baptism. This may appear odd, judgmental, and too intrusive for many, but it was actually a blessing that Paul questioned the belief of these men. Let's take a closer look at this story and see what we can learn about raising questions about the belief of others.

The Lesson:

**I. Questions must be raised (Acts 19:1-3).**

- A. Paul met twelve men who were described as disciples.
  1. Paul had been in Ephesus at an earlier time (Acts 18:19-21). He later departed to go to Jerusalem and told the saints that he would return to Ephesus. During his return to Ephesus he came across some men who are described as disciples (Acts 19:1-2).
  2. Paul asked these men two questions:
    - a. Did they receive the Holy Spirit when they believed? It appears that Paul was probing to see if they had received the Holy Spirit through the laying on hands of an apostle. They replied by saying that they had never even heard of the Holy Spirit.
    - b. The more Paul got to know these guys, the more he pressed them. He then followed up by asking them, "Into what then were they baptized?" He wanted to know what led them to be baptized. What teaching had they received that compelled them to be baptized? They said they were baptized into John's baptism. There is something critical for us to see here.
- B. One has a right to ask religious questions.
  1. The Apostle Paul asked these men some tough and personal questions about their faith. Some people may say that Paul had the right since he was an apostle, but we see many examples in the Bible of men asking religious questions to others (Acts 8:30-31). People didn't accept something just because someone said it. There were many who didn't even accept the words of Paul without checking the scriptures. Those in Berea studied the scriptures despite having the Apostle Paul teaching them (Acts 17:11).
  2. The idea of testing what someone teaches or preaches is foreign to many religious people. Many are taught to simply fall in line with the teaching of their pastor, preacher, father, or reverend. This certainly does not fit with what we see in Acts 19:1-6. These religious men did not say Paul had no right to ask questions. Furthermore, these men were honest in answering Paul's questions.

**II. Error has been taught (Acts 19:4).**

- A. Paul learned that these religious men had been taught wrong.
  1. Does it sound strange that religious men who appeared to be disciples of Jesus had been taught wrong? Most people say it doesn't matter what you are taught as long as you believe in Jesus Christ. However, after Paul heard their responses, he did the unthinkable, at least in our society. He corrected them (Acts 19:4)!

2. Paul explained to them the purpose of John's baptism. That it was to prepare men for Him who was to come.
  - a. John's baptism was authorized by God (Mark 1:1-3).
  - b. It was for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4). However, it was also to prepare the way for people to follow the One that was greater than John: Jesus.
  - c. By the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus, there was only one baptism that all men had to submit to in order to receive forgiveness of sins. This was the baptism in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38). Paul would later write to the church in Ephesus and remind them that there is only one baptism (Ephesians 4:4-6).
  - d. Someone had taught them wrong because John's baptism had gone out of business.
- B. Many people have been taught wrong about baptism and its relation to salvation.
  1. If Paul was living in 2010 and asked people why they were baptized, what would he hear?
    - a. "I was baptized as a baby because I was born in sin." The Bible doesn't teach that we are born in sin (Ezekiel 18:20). Therefore, no baby needs to be baptized. In fact, Jesus said that one must believe in Him prior to baptism. No baby can do that.
    - b. "I was baptized because I was already saved." However, no one was saved prior to baptism in the conversion stories in Acts. Baptism was always done for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Matthew 26:28).
    - c. "I was baptized as an outward sign of inward grace." No one was baptized as evidence that they had already received the forgiveness of sins in the New Testament. Paul was urged to hurry up so he could receive remission of sins through the blood of Jesus in baptism, not to show that he was already saved (Acts 22:16).
    - d. "I don't know why I was baptized." Everyone in the New Testament understood the reason for being baptized. One can't come to Christ unless he knows some things (John 6:44-45; Acts 16:30-34).
    - e. "Baptism is not necessary for salvation." If this is the case, then why did Jesus say otherwise (Mark 16:16)?
    - f. "I was baptized for the forgiveness of sins." This is the only view that is presented in the New Testament (Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16).
  2. Paul would be amazed at the things that he would hear today.
- C. This passage teaches us that it does make a difference what we were taught and believed prior to our baptism. Although these disciples certainly appeared to be sincere in their actions, they had been sincerely misled. One can't be taught wrong and saved right.

### III. The sincere will respond (Acts 19:5).

- A. Paul taught them a more perfect way.
  1. After Paul explained to them John's baptism, he then taught them about Christ crucified.
  2. Paul had to inform them about the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Paul taught them where their faith needed to be: in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Then he explained to them how to be obedient to this message. They were to be baptized in the name of Jesus. This was the only baptism that was and still is required for men (Ephesians 4:6).
- B. Lessons for the religious world.
  1. When someone properly corrects us, will we respond with humility as these men did, or in a hostile manner?
  2. Will we follow the word of God even if it leads us away from our family traditions, our own likes, or how we were initially taught?
  3. It was a blessing that Paul questioned these disciples. As a result of this conversation, they were saved.

### Conclusion:

1. Have you believed and obeyed the truth as the Christians did in the first century?
2. Maybe you have heard something that has challenged your current beliefs. Will you respond to God with hostility or humility?