

Throwing the Baby Out with the Bathwater

Most of us have heard and even used the phrase “throwing the baby out with the bathwater”. Not many of us know (until now) that it came from a German proverb and the earliest literary recording was in a work called “Appeal to Fools”.

Now, I am definitely not calling my readers, fools. However here is what the Bible says about fools.

Fearing the Lord is the beginning of discernment, but fools have despised wisdom and moral instruction. Proverbs 1:7 (NET)

We would do well to take another look at this saying about babies and bathwater and see how it applies in our own lives. The underlining meaning is people tend to hear or read something and decide if it lines up with their beliefs. If it disagrees with their beliefs, it appears disgusting to them, like dirty bathwater, so they throw it all away even though there is some value or truth that they cannot see because their attention is on the dirtiness of the water.

We do this all the time. We listen superficially to an opposite opinion from ours, and automatically reject it because of the person presenting the opinion. We are quick to label people and put them in categories so it is easier for us to reject their words. Republican or Democrat, charismatic or non-charismatic, white-collar or blue-collar, rich or poor, American or other culture. There are so many ways to separate.

If the person speaking is the opposite of us, we tend to throw away any value in their words because all we see is the dirty bathwater. We rarely consider that someone who is dynamically opposed to our way of life is still created in the image of God and has value in the Father’s heart. If we do not hold value in the person, it is hard to hold value in their words.

When a person speaks, we often interpret what we think they are really saying through our own thought process based on our opinion of the one doing the speaking. We don’t dig deeper to find out what they really mean, we just accept our own thinking as fact. We have lost the ability to really, truly communicate, especially with those who are outside the group think. We don’t see any value in debating or discussing opposing viewpoints.

We have also lost the ability to think for ourselves. We have been brainwashed to group think. We find our group and we develop out thought processes around what the group thinks and we are taught to never question that thought. Then as the saying goes, “birds of a feather, flock together”.

Universities used to be about teaching students to think for themselves. Not today. Universities are supporting the idea of group think. In many cases, if you do not group think, you are ostracized.

This happens in every area of society including the religious world. If you are Lutheran or Baptist, you have one set of thoughts or doctrine on what the Bible teaches and you should never question those teachings. If you are Pentecostal or Charismatic, the same is true.

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Let's look at a good example from current events, the news concerning Tylenol. The news says there are studies that show Tylenol should not be taken while pregnant as it may harm the baby. The news also says there are studies showing the opposite. Which is it? Perhaps, only God knows.

Instead of using caution, some pregnant women are going on video for social media, and taking Tylenol to prove they trust their doctors. They believe what they have been taught without examining what they believe looking for truth. They are in group think and have not stopped to think of the consequences for themselves. They have not researched, or looked at opposing documentation, they are blindly following their leaders and what they have been taught.

I am not singling out one group of people. This is just an example and it happens all the time, even in so-called conservative circles. It happens in "church" groups all the time. I call it religion. Religion is group think. We need to learn to think for ourselves, to do research, and above all, to ask God for the wisdom and understanding of Truth and how to apply it to our own lives.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

James 1:5 (ESV)

And one of my favorite verses:

Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.

Jeremiah 33:3 (ESV)

Let me give you an example from my own life. I was raised Baptist. I had been taught baptism in the Holy Spirit or speaking in tongues was from the devil. The Baptist doctrine was very strong in me. I wanted nothing to do with anything that was of the devil.

Just a note, not all Baptists teach this doctrine. There are some who do believe it is really from God, but the group of Baptists that I was a part of did not. I was very much a part of group think. I could not possibly stray from that teaching. I could not possibly hear God for myself. I believed Baptist doctrine was the closest thing to true Biblical doctrine that was out there. Who was I to challenge that thought?

One day I was reading a Christian book for a different reason, when the author began to write about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. My spirit was so stirred that I felt a hunger but I was very afraid. I kept reading and discovered the author left one "church" to become a Baptist. Could I trust him? I didn't know him.

I prayed. The hunger would not leave me. I asked God, if this is really, truly something of you and not the devil, send me someone I know who is Baptist to confirm it. I so wanted all of God, but I didn't want anything of the devil. I wanted to know Truth! I sought for Truth.

A couple of weeks later, a friend of mine called me. She was the daughter of a retired Baptist pastor. We talked and I ended up asking her a question on speaking in tongues. She told me she believed it was real even though she had never experienced it. She then proceeded to tell me about an incident with a youth pastor

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in our “church” years ago, where lots of young people were baptized in the Holy Spirit in that Baptist “church” and what a difference it made.

This was a “church” whose doctrine denied this experience as being from God! God answered my prayer to show me Truth. It was not long after this, I experience this baptism, as well.

It took a lot to break out of the group think, the indoctrination. Every “church” has its set of doctrine and we are all taught to accept that doctrine as truth. But it is Jesus who is Truth, and we must learn to follow Him, even when it goes against the grain.

I made a promise to God that if He showed me Truth against something I had been taught, I would readily reject what man taught and accept His Truth. I wanted Him to show me. That one promise was tested within a short time, but that story is for another time. I did not realize that this promise made so many, many years ago but lead me on an amazing journey out of religion and into relationship with God.

Religion is man’s teachings concerning God. We need to know God for ourselves. We need to hear His voice directly. We cannot be content to only hear His voice sitting on a pew on Sunday mornings. We cannot be satisfied with understanding the Bible strictly from the doctrine set by our “church”.

We must break out of group think and follow our Lord wherever He leads. He is breaking down the walls of religion that enslave His people. Many, if not most, people are afraid to step outside the walls, even if those walls have been broken down. They are afraid to step into the unknown with only Jesus as the leader.

God’s cry and the cry of my heart for decades now has been “Set My people free”. God wants His people free from group think. He wants His people to seek Him, not just to seek to know about Him. No more tossing the baby out with the bathwater. No more accepting unconditionally what others say because of who we think they are, but rather relying on Holy Spirit to bring Truth to us, no matter the vessel.

My challenge to you today is will you tell God you are willing to leave some doctrine behind you if God shows you it is coming from man’s teachings, not the heart of God? Are you willing to pray “Lord, lead me to Truth. I want to know You for who You really are”? Are you willing to search for Him until you know and understand His heart? Are you ready to leave fear behind and take some risks with your Redeemer?

Then take the time to tell Him right now and then watch and listen as He opens your eyes and ears. Ask Him to open your eyes to see the baby and not just the dirty bathwater. Ask Him to help you see the value in everything He created. I pray you truly experience the JOY that comes from finding the Father’s heart.