

The Case Against Cute Conversions

Preaching, false and true, is being done in our modern world by the latest of electronic devices, by the older method of printing press, by the even older method of direct mail, and lately, with an emphasis on cuteness and humor, by bumper sticker and outdoor church signs.

The gospel according to the bumper sticker is far removed in style from the solemn preaching done by the Apostles and evangelists of the New Testament times (or even the typical preaching of a century ago). There are multitudes of cute sayings that appear on car bumpers and marquees, but we mention only a few by example.

There's the one that says, "What part of 'THOU SHALT NOT' don't you understand?" This is very misleading, because the THOU SHALT NOTS found in the Bible are all from the Law of Moses (except one, which says, "You shall not be as the hypocrites," in Matthew 6:5). The "thou shalt not" found in the New Testament are applied to people who still lived under the Law of Moses, except for about five. True, Paul said that "by the law (of Moses) is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20), but the New Testament refines those old laws, with Jesus saying, "But I say unto you."

There's another that says, "Forbidden fruit creates many jams." Cute? Yet, we must admit that there is a truth hidden here, because there is more than one "jam" that will follow the eating of forbidden fruit. However, emphasis needs to be placed on the spiritual death which follows sin (Romans 7:9-13, James 1:13-15), because the other "jams" we get into through sin are almost inconsequential, when compared to being "dead in sin."

Yet another of these cute stickers quotes scripture, by saying, "The wages of sin is death," but this profound and sobering truth is followed by the cute phrase—"Repent before payday." That advice may come too late for those who think that they can wait until they see "payday" coming. The irresponsible and deceptive doctrines of the "End Time" that are promulgated today in many circles could unintentionally create a complacent attitude in sinners. Instead, Paul's message to the Athenians was that "God NOW commands all men to repent," in view of the judgment to come (Acts 17:30-31). I am confident that he did not attempt to make that message palatable to his audience

with cute sayings. His preaching of “righteousness, self-control, and the judgement to come,” terrified Felix (Acts 24:25).

Now, here’s a cutie—“Preach the gospel at all times—Use words if necessary.” What a blunder! There is no gospel without words (1 Corinthians 1:21, Acts 15:7). There may be some moral influence we achieve through wordless example, but there is no salvation without the word (Acts 13:26, 20:32).

The admonitions of Paul to his proteges in the field of evangelism were not “cute.” They read— (2 Timothy 1:13) “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”-- (2 Timothy 2:15) “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” --(2 Timothy 4:2-4) “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; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”-- (Titus 2:6-8) “...exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned...”

It would be wise on our part to re-introduce the element of sobriety and piety, when engaged in the spread of the gospel. The gospel according to the bumper sticker will lead astray those who are tickled by cuteness. Let us not tickle people into the kingdom of God. Let us win them with sound and vibrant preaching.

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