

431 What really matters – Spirit-renewed minds

A friend suggested that we should read *other than* ‘echo-chamber’ books: after a lifetime of being adamant on one current issue, he had read a book with a contrary view and ended up, after a long battle with himself, renewing his mind. So, recently, I bought three contrary books on two topics.

Sadly, all three *strengthened* my current views, and I wrote two articles. But I much prefer to be positive and encouraging, so I scrapped them, and waited.

The next line that emerged was the fact that I am (and others of you are) surrounded by really lovely people who don’t (won’t?) believe in Jesus. How do we reach them? This is actually where I started:^[1] my friend ‘Martha’ was told she had to ‘preach the gospel’, but what is ‘the gospel’?

[Negativity warning] One book was recommended by a friend who said that we should preach the *whole* gospel; I pressed, and it seems one missing element is: ‘**Repent** and believe.’ If people don’t know properly what sin is, they can’t really believe, but ‘they’ are telling us that various things the Bible clearly says are sin are not sin after all! Our friends and family may be really nice people, but they need to know that they are sinners.

[Negativity warning II] Of those three books, the first gave 10 reasons why God’s principle of complementarity in relationships can only ever be ‘one man and one woman’; the second gave 21 reasons. The third covered ‘complementarian’ theology: men and women are complementary, but men were created by God to be leaders, so only men should lead churches. While women can teach other women and can teach children, they must not teach (adult) men. I had no idea that this theology was still so strong.

In its introduction, one said, ‘Authors do not write books unless they want to persuade people.’ Really?! Academia might disagree! But that statement pointed me towards a summary of what might be part of the problem when trying to ‘preach the gospel’ to lovely people.

The three books epitomised, for me, the worst side of well-meaning Christians:

Prescription – There is only one way to understand certain issues: what ‘the Bible teaches’.

Persuasion – Our job is to persuade lovely people that we are right and they are wrong.

Conviction – Despite being apparently lovely, they need to know that they are evil from birth.

[Negativity warning III] These three strands (PPC) are the kind of religious attitudes that Jesus spoke out against throughout his ministry. Added to that, the apostle Paul would probably admit that – as Saul, the pharisee – PPC was what he stood for, violently!

Sadly, it’s what I can see in myself for the *major part* of my Christian life. God forgive me!

[Positivity warning] There is hope: there feels to me to be a move, especially among the younger generation of Christians, to allow our minds to be renewed by the Spirit.^[430] Hallelujah!